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THE INDEPENDENT

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Section Two cover story

The making of the modern girl

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Judgement day for a British film-maker

The lager drinker's paradise holiday

Why students are flocking to Belgium

Farmers urge slaughter of older animals as Europe confirms ban on beef

'Kill our cows and save farming'

DONALD MACINTYRE
PAUL FIELD
AND SARAH HELM

Farmers last night conceded what ministers have so far refused to accept - that only a cull of their herds can restore confidence in British beef. In an unprecedented plea to the Prime Minister, John Major, they urged the removal of at least 15,000 older cattle a week from the food chain at a cost of £70m a year.

The scheme, which has already been presented to ministers, would mean the carcasses of the slaughtered cattle would be incinerated rather than used in meat products.

The National Farmers' Union President, Sir David Nash, said: "The events of the past week show that we have gone beyond the stage of relying solely on science."

In the first indication of a Government U-turn over the crisis, Mr Major promised he would consider the call for selective slaughter "very carefully" but made it clear that if he had to take such measures he would lay the blame squarely on the Opposition for "undermining confidence" in the beef industry.

Mr Major was speaking as it became clear in Brussels that the European Commission will today confirm its ban on British beef sales despite last-minute efforts by senior British diplomats and scientists to reverse the decision. European veterinary experts last night confirmed the ban must go.

But there were also signs the Commission was prepared to consider cash help for British farmers if the Government escalates its response to the crisis by slaughtering cattle. At the same time, Whitehall sources were not ruling out the possibility that Mr Major will raise the issue of the beef ban, which ministers have described as "outrageous", when he goes to Turin on Friday for the Inter-Governmental Conference on the EU's future.

In angry exchanges in the



Facing crisis: Farmers at an emergency meeting organised by the National Farmers' Union in Asham, Brian, York, yesterday

Commons, Mr Major made it clear that ministers would study proposals, made in the letter from Sir David, for 12,000 to 15,000 cows being destroyed each week instead of being killed for meat. Sir David called for cattle normally slaughtered

at the end of their working lives as dairy cows or suckling mothers to be banned from entering the human food chain.

The proposal, backed by leading food manufacturing, catering and retailing industry leaders, came as Ministry of

Agriculture officials began exploring their chances of securing EU funds to compensate farmers for losing the profits from sending dairy cows no longer providing milk to be slaughtered for beef.

There were clear signs of ir-

ritation among senior ministers with Douglas Hogg, Minister for Agriculture, for having given credence to the idea of large-scale slaughter by publicly airing the option at the weekend. It was left to Stephen Dorrell the Health Secretary, to conduct

a media blitz throughout the day - including some rough handling by angry housewives and farmers on a radio phone-in show during which he argued there were better ways of spending huge sums on public health than by compensating

farmers for unnecessarily slaughtered cows. In the Commons, Mr Major reserved his public anger for the Opposition. Tony Blair, the Labour leader, accused the Government of "mind boggling incompetence" and demanded that Mr

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Council blocks report on child victims

PATRICIA WYNNE DAVIES
Legal Affairs Editor

A council voted yesterday to suppress an independent report into one of Britain's worst child sex abuse scandals because of fears that it could help seriously damaged victims in their legal claims.

The decision by Clwyd County Council came after an eleven-hour intervention by its insurers Municipal Mutual, who threatened to cancel the authority's cover against a possible £20m in compensation from abused former residents of care homes in the county.

Welsh Labour MPs condemned the move as "Kafkaesque" - while the affair could set worrying precedents for the ganging of future council-initiated inquiries. That is because it appears to establish that a

New child abuse scandal

How the Independent revealed the scandal in 1991

most of the 40 copies in circulation will now be pulped after all but a handful of Clwyd's 64 councillors opted to halt publication.

The investigation covered one of the longest-running and most serious abuse scandals involving children in local authority care. From 2,000 statements and 150 complaints, 58 files were sent to the Crown Prosecution Service, but just seven men were eventually convicted of sex abuse or assault in separate prosecutions brought

during a four-year police investigation covering 46 homes in total.

John Allen, formerly of the Bryn Alyn Home, Wrexham, was jailed for six years for sex offences against boys. Peter Howarth, former deputy head of the council-run Bryn Estyn, near Wrexham, was jailed for 10 years for assaulting seven boys between 1974 and 1984.

According to North Wales sources, among a host of findings the report criticises Clwyd social services' running of its own homes, the infrequency of visits to homes by the Welsh Office's Social Services Inspectorate, and inadequate responses by the authorities to signs that children in care might be being abused.

The interests of the children often took second place to the preservation of professional

witnesses to speak to the Gillings team.

Gillings hurriedly called off a press conference to launch the report last Friday after Browne Jacobson, solicitors for the Municipal Mutual, insisted that its contents could help up to 40 abuse victims secure compensation for their suffering. Some former residents were so traumatised by their childhood experiences in the homes that they later committed suicide.

Municipal Mutual, go into financial difficulties in 1991, is in a "solvent run-off" situation and is prevented from writing new business. Outstanding business is being handled by Zurich Mutual.

Councillors were also warned that they could be made personally liable for legal payments, risking bankruptcy.

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Britain faces two-speed Europe

MARY DEJESKY

Laval

France and Germany yesterday laid out plans to create a single currency which would in effect relegate Britain to the slow lane of a two-speed Europe.

After a long period when prospects for monetary union have seemed to be in abeyance, Bonn and Paris plan to give the idea a political boost ahead of Friday's Turin summit. The meeting is being called to rewrite the Maastricht treaty, despite the first set out the goal of monetary union.

The French and German finance ministers, Jean Arthur and Theo Waigel, met in the French town of Laval to set out ideas on how monetary union should operate. They said that they were determined to launch a single currency by the 1999 deadline laid down in the EU Maastricht treaty, despite the economic gloom which surrounds the prospects for both nations.

Mr Waigel said that the timetable for monetary union must be stuck to. "We plan to stick to the timetable, since everything else could lead to ex-

change rate tensions," he said. Mr Arthur said France and Germany had agreed on the need for a system governing exchange rate relations between those who join a single European currency in 1999 and those who stay outside. This would recreate the European Monetary System, but with the Euro - the new European currency - at its heart.

The exchange rate mechanism would allow for "intervention by the European central bank, with the Euro as the anchor point," Mr Arthur said. The idea is to penalise countries

which allow their currencies to slide against the Euro. "We do not want to make way for competitive devaluations," Mr Arthur said. The plan would mean that Britain could be asked to maintain a parity against the Euro - recreating the disastrous scenario which led to the pound's exit from the exchange rate mechanism in 1992.

Mr Arthur said that the two ministers had also discussed plans to create a new body within the EU that would set economic policy - and from which Britain would be excluded if it chose not to enter

IN BRIEF

Fighting chance

The Army is considering sending women into the front line as members of tank and infantry units

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Crime rate falls

The number of recorded crimes fell by 2.4 per cent last year in England and Wales

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Today's weather

Sunny but cold again with frost tonight. Section Two, page 29

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news

BSE crisis: Commission decision reached in atmosphere of intense confusion and with little scientific backing

EU set to confirm ban on exports

SARAH HELM
Brussels

The European Commission will today attempt to halt the crisis over British beef by confirming an unprecedented total ban on British beef exports to the EU and the rest of the world. In the face of fierce British protests the Commission argues that it has no choice but to impose the ban in order to maintain confidence in the EU market.

However, the Commission decision has been taken in an atmosphere of intense confusion in Brussels, with little clear legal or scientific basis. The Commission has come under intense pressure to take a firm lead, and blame Britain for giving it no warning of the alarm.

Birds Eye stops making burgers

WILL BENNETT and
ROBERT CRANE

Production of beefburgers was halted by the frozen-food company Birds Eye yesterday as the effects of the collapse in consumer confidence caused by the BSE scare reverberated through the food industry.

Airlines and some hospitals and restaurant chains also joined the move away from British beef, but most supermarket chains said they would continue to stock it and it will remain on the menu at Birmingham Palace.

The decision by Birds Eye to suspend beefburger production at its plant in Lowestoft, Suffolk, which employs 1,000 people, was another blow for farmers. But the company said it would not lead to redundancies.

A company statement said: "Whilst we remain confident about the quality and safety of our beef products, we have decided that in the light of continued consumer concerns we are reviewing the use of British beef and are considering options such as alternative sourcing and product reformulations."

Virgin Atlantic, Richard Branson's airline, yesterday banned British beef from its flights. A spokeswoman said: "We have decided to remove all beef products from our flights leaving the UK. This is due to the level of public concern."

The decision follows bans by British Airways and British Midland. A BA spokesman said: "This was in acknowledgement of our passengers' concerns. Following detailed examination of current facts we have readjusted our menus. We still offer beef where beef is an option, such as Argentinian beef or Scottish beef which has been farmed organically."

A spokesman for Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital Trust in London said: "We have taken beef off the paediatric menu but on the adult menu it is not sourced from within the UK... None of our patients wanted to eat British beef."

But at the John Radcliffe Hospital Trust in Oxfordshire, a spokesman said: "We have not taken it off the menu because we have had no directive to from the Department of Health and because at the end of the day it is up to patient choice."

A spokeswoman for the Beefbeef restaurant chain said that it was continuing to serve British beef but "where it is on the menu we inform the customers so that they can make an informed decision".

Tesco, Safeway, Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer all said that they would continue to sell British beef, stressing that they bought only the best-quality meat and that products would be clearly labelled.

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and therefore little time to preempt the crisis. While Britain has accused the European Commission of taking unjustified action by imposing a ban, the Commission argues that the ban is the minimum necessary to contain the problem.

At one point during the discussions it is understood that Franz Fischler, the Agriculture Commissioner, canvassed the idea of banning the marketing of British beef throughout the EU, including Britain. A marketing ban would have been far more serious than an export ban, leading to the immediate removal of all beef products of Europe's shelves.

The Commission has an obligation under the EU treaties to protect the health

and safety of all consumers, and questions have been raised about whether Brussels should not take action to protect British consumers too. However, this proposal was swiftly set aside in view of the EU's veterinary committee,

which rejected the proposal.

British plea for boycott exemptions is rejected

Europe's chief veterinary officers last night rejected Britain's request that "all-embracing" exemptions for "certain products" should be excluded from the world-wide boycott, writes Matthew Palmer in Brussels. Up to last night European Commission officials were referring to an "exhaustive list of the products which would be hit but said they intended the "all-embracing". Obvious victims would be stock cubes, soups, beef-flavoured prepared dishes containing beef flavouring, gravy granules made from beef, etc. But foods containing gelatine or other binding agents sometimes derived from beef include jellies, yoghurts, ice-creams, sorbets, fruit gums and biscuits. Medicines containing beef extract include lipstick, various emulsions and creams, shampoos.

storm it would cause. The sense of confusion in Brussels intensified yesterday when even the export ban first announced by Mr Fischler on Monday evening, following advice from the EU's veterinary committee,

was apparently put on hold.

Commission sources said the ban was blocked at the last minute after Neil Kinnock and Leon Brittan, the two British commissioners, refused to endorse it. However, other offi-

cials denied this, saying Jacques Santer, the Commission President, had delayed a decision following a telephone call from John Major urging the Commission to look again at the evidence. A second meeting of EU veterinary experts yesterday endorsed Monday's ruling to impose and export ban.

The last-minute doubts, however, about whether to go ahead with the ban will only further undermine public confidence in the handling of the crisis.

Questions were also being asked in Brussels yesterday about the wide scope of the ban, agreed by the EU veterinary committee. Some senior EU vets suggested the all-inclusive nature of the ban was political and not taken for scientific rea-

sons. The decision was taken to draw the ban as broadly as possible by blocking export of all beef, beef products and beef-related products.

However, in the hurry to produce a proposal no clear list was drawn up, leading to fears that a big range of British food and pharmaceutical products could be barred from export. Senior EU vets said yesterday that there was no need to ban certain beef-related products, such as gelatine, and these should be clearly eliminated from the ban.

There was also deep uncertainty yesterday about whether the Commission has the power to impose a ban on British beef exports to the non-EU countries.

IN BRIEF

'Stalker' guilty of assault

A stalker convicted of assaulting a young woman was warned by a judge that he faced a "lengthy custodial sentence". The conviction of Italian Gattano Constanza, 31, from Luton, for assault was a landmark in moves to make stalking a crime because he had never touched his victim.

He was found guilty after a jury at Luton Crown Court heard he had "destroyed" the life of computer operator Louise Wilson, 23, for two weeks with an obsessive campaign of more than 800 letters, phone calls and pain-draubing. He had denied the single charge of assault causing actual bodily harm between 1993 and last year.

Top trout lake shuts

Britain's top trout fishing lake was closed yesterday after hundreds of fish were found to have died. Blagdon Lake, near Bristol, was stocked with 30,000 brown and rainbow trout for the start of the trout fishing season. Tests were being carried out last night.

Life for scissors killer

A man was jailed for life for hacking to death his stepdaughter and a young boy with scissors to cover up a sex attack. Tariq Rehman, of Bradford, attacked Rachel Rooney, 15, and Jonathan Copley, with such force, the scissors snapped in two. Leeds Crown Court was told.

Hours earlier, he had tried to molest Rachel, his stepdaughter. Rehman, 35, a district manager with Britannia Assurance, slaughtered the children to stop them telling about the sex attack, it was alleged. A jury of seven women and five men took less than three hours to find him guilty of their murders.

Schoolgirl alert

Police were "very concerned" last night for the safety of a Manchester girl who left home after being bullied at school. An alert has gone out to all ports after Sally McGrath, 13, said in a letter that she wanted to go to France.

Morgue mix-up

Hospital chiefs have apologised after the wrong body was released from a morgue for a funeral. Undertakers arranging the burial of pensioner John Callaghan, 77, went to collect his body but discovered it had been released to another family three weeks ago and cremated. Cardiff's University Hospital, Wales's biggest hospital, has launched an inquiry into how Mr Callaghan was confused with another man with a similar surname.

Extradition bid

Extradition proceedings have started to bring home one of Britain's most wanted men from a Dutch jail. Andrew Shackley, 26, described by police as "unstable and dangerous" - is sought to face charges involving attempted murder, drug dealing and the death of a woman in a high-speed car race. A warning was broadcast about him on BBC TV's Crime Watch.

Truck and roll

A mobile studio which belonged to the Rolling Stones will be sold up to £20,000 at an auction of rock memorabilia in London next month. Bob Marley and Deep Purple also received bids in the custom-built DAF truck.

Amie goes home

Dunblane massacre victim Amie Adam, aged five, who suffered a shattered thigh, left hospital last night with her parents. Two other children injured in the shooting - Amy Hutchinson and Mark Mullan - remain in hospital in Stirling.

20p 'robber' cleared

An Old Bailey court case over a 20p robbery which first cost an estimated £130,000 ended in an acquittal. The jury took just 45 minutes to clear 19-year-old Michael Salmon from Manor Park, east London of robbing a student. A blackmail charge had been dropped.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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BACK ISSUES

Back issues of the Independent are available from News International, telephone 0898 202455.



On the up: Willie McLean, of Auchterarder, Stirlingshire, with his Aberdeen Angus cattle fed entirely on a vegetarian diet and now in great demand. Photograph: Ian Waldie

Industry losses reach £50m in first week

PAUL FIELD

The British beef industry lost at least £50m in the first week of the latest BSE scare despite attempts by ministers to restore confidence in the meat trade.

Last night beef farmers in Ulster were bracing themselves for financial ruin after they failed to get their product sold worldwide under a local label to differentiate from British beef. Over 20,000 jobs in the province depend on the beef industry.

Farming leaders and the Meat Livestock Commission are reluctant to put a figure on the costs of the BSE scare but it is understood that the domestic industry has lost half its

business since the Government admitted a possible link between 10 cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease and infected beef - a loss of £40m.

A spokesman for the Meat Livestock Commission, Ray Barrowdale, said much beef would have to be destroyed. "Wholesalers are not buying beef. Their fridges are full of meat and they will only shift it by discounting. Prices of beef in the supermarkets will probably fall by half. If not the beef will have to be destroyed."

At cattle markets across Britain business slumped by 95 per cent. Pubs normally

crammed full of heifers and steers were empty. Only sheep and pigs kept the markets open.

As the beef scare broke out last week, prices fell on Thursday and Friday by 20p to 30p per kilo live weight, amounting to between £100 and £150 per animal. This week the prices have remained at that level.

Yesterday, at Shrewsbury cattle market, more than £500,000 worth of business was lost when none of the usual 850 cattle was brought to auction. The picture was mirrored at other auctions across the country.

John Martin, secretary of the Livestock Auctioneers Association, said: "The crisis has

been a disaster for us. The crisis which forced it to make 52 staff redundant, lay off 140 and send 100 on leave."

As the crisis deepened it has emerged that depressed farmers are already being admitted to hospital because of distress caused by the BSE scare.

Dr Peter Higgins, of the Clydine Community Care NHS Trust, north Wales, reported that potentially suicidal cases had been treated. "Our trained volunteers are busy with calls. Farming can be a lonely business and there were already intense economic pressures before this latest crisis."

Slump takes toll on jobs

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

The "mad cow" crisis yesterday began to take its toll on jobs as slaughterhouses stopped killing cattle and at least one plant closed.

Two of the country's largest companies laid workers off, sent others on holiday and announced redundancies. Leaders of the meat processing industry warned that in common with farmers they might also be seeking compensation.

Forfar Meat Traders, based at Dundee, became the first corporate victim, closing with the loss of 12 jobs. Mark Batchelor, director of the company blamed a "needless panic" on ministers. He said: "We have found it more and more difficult to continue trading with every BSE scare over the last few years. This scare has been the final nail in the coffin."

Time to stand up for Britain



DAVID AARONOVITCH

It was planned that way, of course. Mr Major's job - blaming Labour for the beef crisis - was going to be difficult enough as it was, without such a tangible reminder of the days when ministers used to express opinions before consulting scientific committees. Wrong opinions, as it turned out.

With his front bench Gummie-free, the PM set about the business with a will. The thrust of his case, as it revealed itself, was as follows: last week we were having a perfectly manageable little health scare - past problem, not many dead, all better now - when along came Tony Blair and Harriet

Harman and irresponsibly frightened the living daylight out of consumers. So if horrid things happen and cattle get slaughtered as a result of all this hysteria, it will be their fault.

But there was a paradox. While the PM's voice rose with anger and frustration, calling forth the full range of Major gesticulation (from pointing leftwards to pointing rightwards) the Labour leader probed forensically and quietly. Rarely has the case for calm been urged with such lack of restraint, nor the argument for panic pressed with such cool deliberation.

The best indication that the Major had lost the plot came when Blair asked the question that every consumer wants the answer to - how big is the risk now? - prompting the response that Labour's attitude would be "unfathomable" to people in the agricultural industry and those outside it. Blair - not just fathomable but translucent - carefully enunciated that the Government was guilty of "mind-hoggling-in-competence". Toe-knee sat down. "I would have thought you had done enough damage in the last few days," retorted Mr Major.

But was Labour alone to blame? Paul Molland (C, West Gloucestershire) and farmer added another name. Wasn't it him, too, who boomed, "for the media to stand up for Britain?" For a start they could go to the continent and "examine what in Europe is known as staggers". Is it

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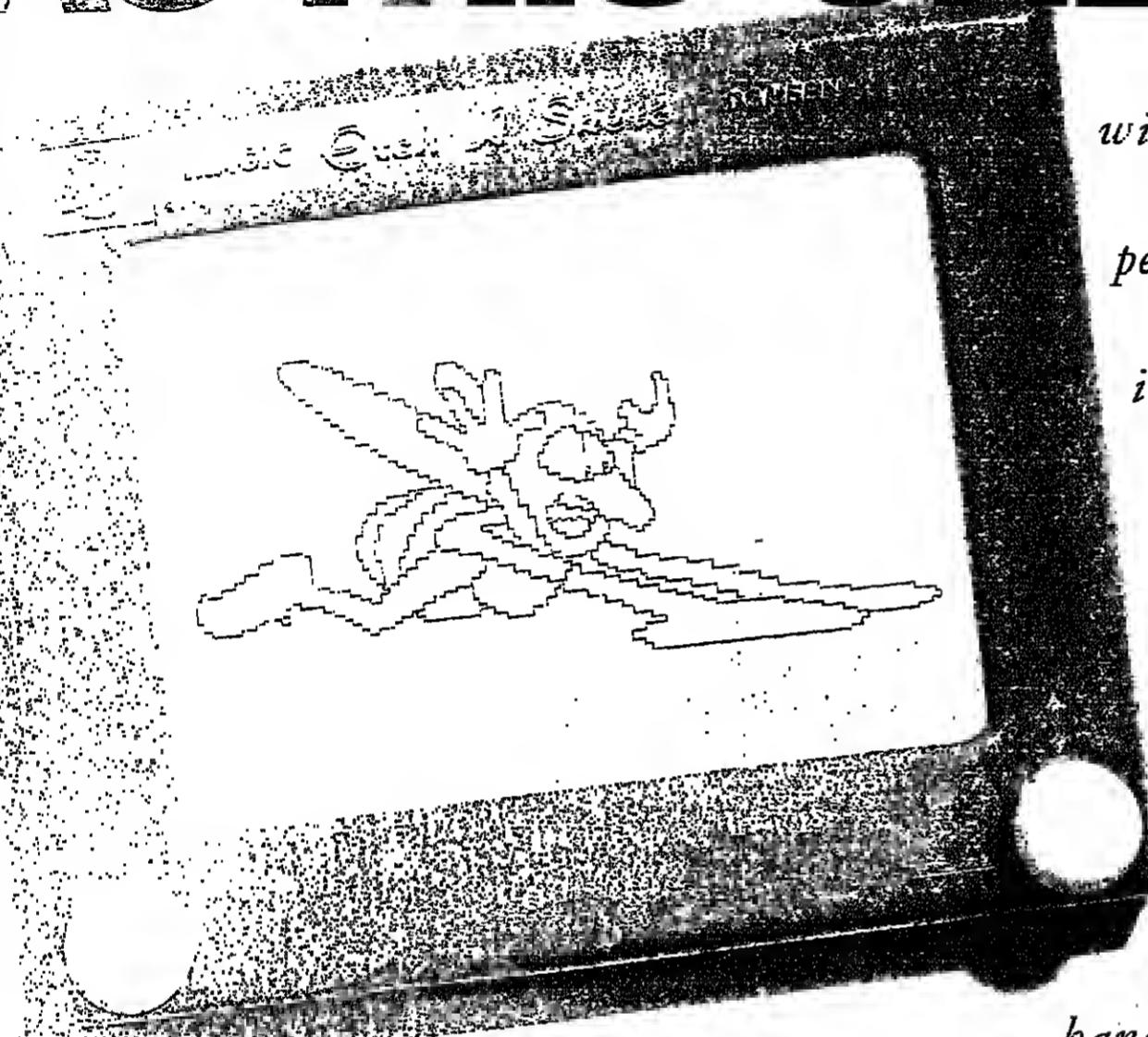
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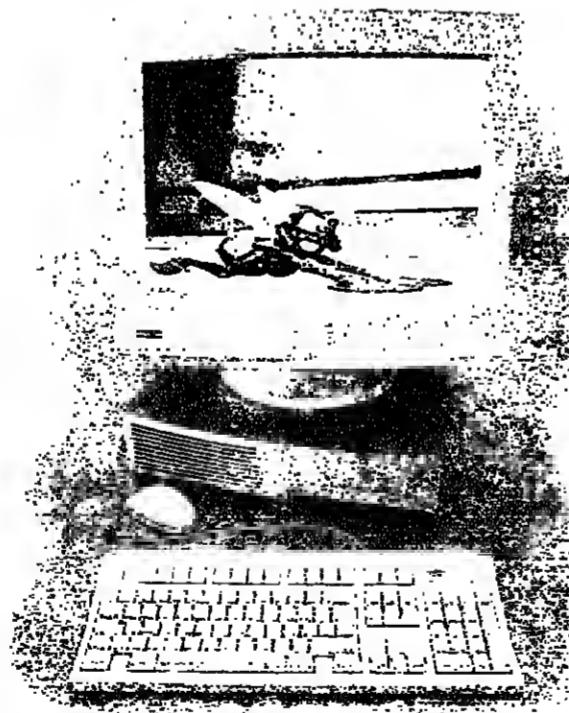


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East End corruption: Auditor attacks Lib Dems for manipulating policy to favour own trading interests in Petticoat Lane area

Councillors ran London markets in 'cavalier' way

JAMES CUSICK

The conduct of councillors and town hall officials responsible for running the world-famous street markets of Petticoat Lane and Brick Lane in London's East End was yesterday criticised as "disturbing" and "cavalier" in a forceful report by the District Auditor.

Kash Pandya described a "catalogue of unacceptable conduct" which led to a disregard for rules and procedures in the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

It was "an object lesson for members on how not to exercise their roles", said Mr Pandya in his 88-page report into the running of the markets.

Over three years Mr Pandya investigated how the then Liberal Democrat-run council had managed to turn a £300,000 surplus on its market business in 1989 into a deficit of £1.5m by March 1994.

Although highly critical of how the borough ran its market business, how it lost income from licensed pitches, and how it did nothing about "illegal" sub-letting of pitches, Mr Pandya reserved his strongest criticism for how councillors directly involved in street trading manipulated council policy in their own financial interest.

Considering the lucrative business of sub-letting some of the council's 7,000 pitches - mainly located in the Bethnal Green area - Mr Pandya states this "unlawful" trade exists and can only exist "with the knowledge of some council officers".

The Auditor looked at the

business activities of three named councillors. Councillor Betty Wright, elected as a Liberal Democrat councillor in May 1990, was an unlicensed trader working from a sub-let pitch. After her election she was ordered to stop but continued.

At the time of her election the council was revoking the licence. Mr Pandya's report refers to "documentary evidence" that showed certain councillors applying pressure on council officers not to proceed with revocation which would have pushed Mrs Wright out of business. The report states: "The role played by some members, in particular Councillors Wright, John Snooks and Jeremy Shaw during this period gives me cause for considerable concern."

Although Mrs Wright claims never to have traded from the pitch, Mr Pandya says the roles played by Mr Snooks (the then chairman of the borough's street trading panel) and Mr Shaw were "disturbing".

However, Mr Pandya says the evidence fails short of showing "wilful misconduct" and persuaded him not to take the matter to the criminal courts and to seek the recovery of lost revenue on surcharging the councillors.

In an investigation in 1992 by John Hendy QC of the Crown Prosecution Service also concluded there was "insufficient evidence" to proceed.

Mr Pandya investigation into the £1m deficit on the street trading account found that charges which the council listed for such services as refuse collection were irregular and



Dirty linen: The world-famous Petticoat Lane in east London, where "illegal" and "disturbing" practices have been found

Photograph: Network

DAILY POEM

Raydance

By Olivia Byard

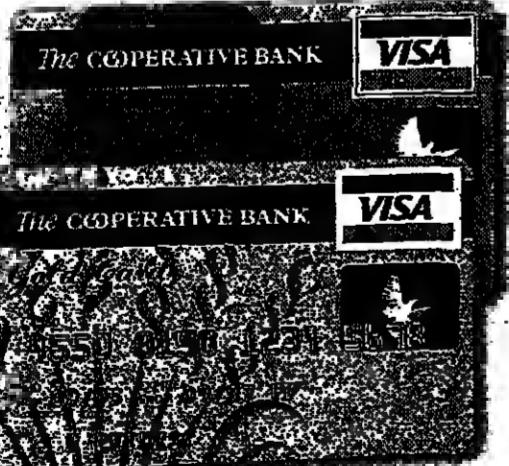
Rays, in the aquarium, dance round
the salty currents, down the water's shimmer
to the music's drift. Twirling, whirling,
tails like tops beneath, their strange wide fins
curl through the foam as they turn,
breathing water in, breaking out.

On the quay at Cadgwith, skate are piled
in pairs, white clown faces with mouths agape,
inhaling the reek of dead fish. I listen,
hastily practise an awkward step.

Olivia Byard was born in south Wales, and currently lives and works in Oxford. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Poetry Review*, *Acumen*, and *The Observer*. Her forthcoming collection *From a Benediction* (Peterloo Poets) will be published next year.

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news

Rise in heavy drinking set to defeat targets

General Household Survey: A nation's lifestyle and habits revealed

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

The Government is set to miss its "Health of the Nation" targets for cutting smoking and drinking, the latest figures from the General Household Survey show.

The programme is already in trouble because smoking among children has increased rather than fallen. Obesity appears to be rising rather than dropping, and the latest figures for lung-cancer deaths among women under 75 are also moving in the wrong direction.

The survey of the nation's lifestyle in 1994 published yesterday suggest that the smoking targets for adults are also unlikely to be met — and that excessive alcohol consumption is moving the wrong way for both men and women. In 1994, more in both sexes were drinking above the "sensible" limits of 21 and 14 units a week respectively — and women's alcohol consumption has been on the increase for a decade.

Greater availability of drink in supermarkets and general stores over the past 20 years may help to explain that, Nikki Bennett, the head of the survey, said.

"Alcohol is more readily available, but women also have increased independence and wider social lives now that more are working. More women have moved to college and away from home at an earlier age, and grown up in that culture."

Bob Barnes, director of social surveys for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, added that more women combining work and home may have produced increased stress that had led to more drinking.

Smoking, by contrast, is declining among both men and women, but at an appreciably slower rate than in the Eighties. Smokers are down from 51 per cent of men in 1974 to 38 per cent, and from 41 per cent of women 20 years ago to 26 per cent.

On current progress, the target of fewer than one in five smoking by 2000 looks unlikely to be met for men, but may be achieved for women.

Men who smoked were much more likely to drink excessively than men who did not — one in three, compared with one in five — and women who smoked were twice as likely to drink too much.

Since 1980, the proportion saying they find it hard to cope has remained broadly constant — although the figures relate only to those living at home, not to the 7 per cent of those over 65 in nursing and residential homes.

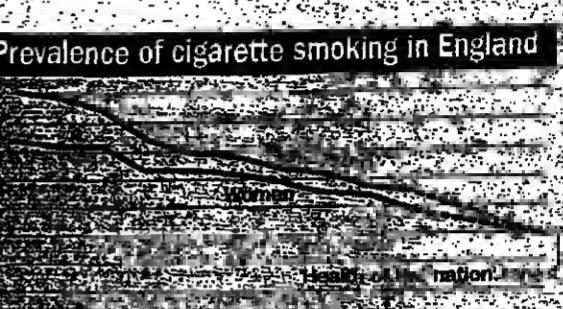
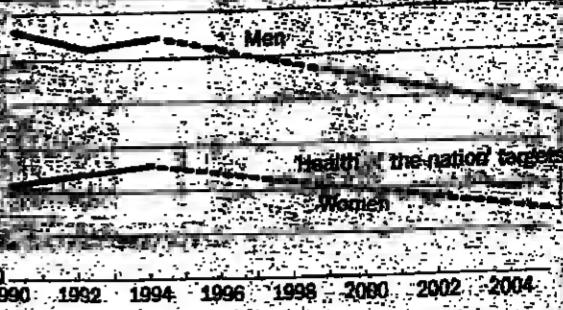
More of those over 65 now live alone than in 1980 (39 per cent compared with 34 per cent) and almost 60 per cent report a long-standing illness or disability which for more than 40 per cent limits their activities.

One in ten say that they cannot walk down the road or get up and down stairs alone, with 16 per cent saying they are unable to do their own shopping. The proportions rise sharply with age.

□ *Living in Britain: results from the 1994 General Household Survey: HMSO: £23.50.*



Percentage drinking more than the then recommended sensible limit: England



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Cancer from asbestos dust 'is like lottery'

Breathing asbestos dust was like buying lottery tickets and no one could tell which particles caused individual cancers, one of Britain's biggest engineering companies claimed in the Court of Appeal yesterday.

T&N was trying to overturn a High Court judge's landmark decision last October that it must pay damages to two people who as children played in the drifts of white dust which blanketed the roads around their homes.

It was the first time that a court had awarded compensation for asbestos claims made by anyone other than those who had worked in a plant.

William Woodward QC, for T&N, told three judges yesterday that it could never be known when and where a person developed the cancer of the lung lining, mesothelioma.

One of the victims, Arthur Margeson, had played around the factory of JW Roberts in Armley, Leeds, which made insulating mattresses for boilers, for eight years before the dangers were realised and the factory owners became liable to protect people from the risks.

While he was at school and playing around the area he was also breathing in asbestos dust for which T&N were not liable.

Mr Woodward said Mr Margeson, who had lived in the area since 1925, was exposed during his childhood to "guilty dust".

The hearing continues today.

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Film awards: Unprecedented achievements by Emma Thompson and Nick Park



Star quality: Nick Park's 'Wallace and Gromit'



Best screenplay: Emma Thompson accepting the award on Monday. Photograph: Reuter

Britons make history with Oscar triumphs

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

Emma Thompson won an unprecedented double on Monday night when she was awarded an Oscar for her adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Coming on top of her 1991 Oscar for best actress in another classic British adaptation, *Howard's End*, it made her the first woman to win both a screenplay award and an acting honour.

"Before I came, I went to visit Jane Austen's grave in Winchester cathedral to pay my respects and tell her about the gosses," Thompson joked as she accepted the award in Los Angeles on Monday night.

Also celebrating an extraordinary achievement was Nick Park, the Bristol-based creator of the ingenious inventor Wallace and his long-suffering dog Gromit, who has won awards for every film he has entered. This year he won his third Oscar in a row for his animated film *A Close Shave*.

A third Oscar was won for Britain by Jon Blair for his documentary, *Annie Frank Remembered*.

Emma Thompson, who recently broke up with her husband, the actor/director Kenneth Branagh, had also

been nominated for best actress for her role as Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility*, but that went to Susan Sarandon for the nun in *Dead Man Walking*. British actresses who have won the elusive best actress double include Elizabeth Taylor and Olivia De Havilland.

Nick Park — the first Briton to win three Oscars — confirmed after the ceremony that he was involved in talks with Hollywood executives about making a feature-length animated film. But he says is determined not to recreate *Wallace and Gromit* for it, even though he has admitted that Gromit resembles himself in "always carrying the baggage of the past and the worry of the future".

He said after the award ceremony: "I'm sitting down to write a feature film that has been pitched to quite a few people here. *Wallace and Gromit* will be put on the shelf for a while."

Mel Gibson, director and star, took the best film and best director for *Braveheart*, his savage and controversial tale of the 13th-century Scottish patriot William Wallace. The film also won awards for sound effects, make-up and cinematography, closing up a resounding five Oscars in all and prompting pre-

dictions of a renewed tourist boom in Scotland as well as a resurgence of nationalism.

Other award winners included Nicolas Cage, for his portrait of a suicidal alcoholic in *Leaving Las Vegas*, and Kevin Spacey for best supporting actor in *The Usual Suspects*.

Mira Sorvino won best supporting actress for *Mighty Aphrodite* — beating the young

British actress Kate Winslet who had been nominated for her role as Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* — while Christopher McQuarrie took best screenplay (written directly for a film) for *The Usual Suspects*.

Jon Blair, after accepting his Oscar for the film about the young girl whose diary recorded her two years of hiding in Amsterdam from Nazi troops, introduced his frail companion on stage as Miep Gies, who helped keep the Frank family alive in their attic hiding place.

"Without her, Anne Frank's story might never have been told. She found her diary on the floor," he said to a wave of applause. Both *Annie Frank Remembered* and *A Close Shave* will be shown by the BBC over Easter.

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

Some veterans suffering from so-called Gulf war syndrome are showing physical evidence of nerve damage, according to new research.

The findings suggest that the nervous systems of individuals who believe they have the syndrome, do demonstrate clear differences when compared with those of the general population.

The findings, to be published in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* later this week, will be seized on by scores of men and women who fought in the Gulf and have since suffered a range of debilitating symptoms. They are campaigning for recognition of Gulf war syndrome by the Ministry of Defence, and many are demanding compensation.

A number of veterans have died after suffering a breakdown in their health that relatives attribute to the syndrome.

Dr Goran Jamal, of the Institute of Neurological Sciences at the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow, analysed the veterans' ability to hear sound impulses, a test designed to determine damage to the central nervous system.

"One of the problems is we research these substances alone, in isolation," said Dr Jamal. "What we don't know is the combined effect, of for instance Naps combined with other compounds, and I think it is underestimated."

Katherine Lamb, a former army nurse from Helensburgh, Strathclyde, says on the programme: "I am angry that the MOD have continued to deny there are medical problems. I can't understand why they continue to do this in the light of the evidence available. I think they will have to accept at the end of the day that they have some responsibility for the medical condition of the troops that went in the Gulf."

Benefits ban 'lawful'

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

The controversial decision to withdraw benefits from most asylum seekers was yesterday declared lawful by the High Court, but judges voiced concern over the adverse effects the move may have on genuine refugees.

Lord Justice Beldam and Mr Justice Buxton said they shared the views of the Government's independent social security advisers, who earlier this year had condemned the benefit changes. The Social Security Advisory Committee had agreed that there was a need to deter a growing number of bo-

gue asylum seekers, but said a better way was to ensure more efficient asylum procedures "rather than making changes to the benefits system which would produce such drastic and unwelcome consequences".

The judges' remarks came as the Refugee Council announced that 400 asylum seekers were now homeless and penniless as a result of the benefit changes which came into effect on 5 February. The ruling is expected to affect about 30,000 asylum seekers a year.

But yesterday, in a case which could go all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, the judges rejected claims that

Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, had acted irrationally or unlawfully when he introduced the changes.

In the case brought by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and "Miss B" — who fled Zaire after her husband was murdered and she was raped while held by security forces — the judges ruled the withdrawal of benefits could not be said to be the same as forcing the deportation or expulsion of asylum seekers or withdrawing appeal rights, in contravention of the United Nations Convention on Refugees.

However, they gave the JCWI and Miss B leave to appeal.

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Cancer from asbestos dusts like lottery

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Ministers may support Bill to outlaw stalking

JOHN RENTOUL

Political Correspondent

The Government could take an opposition move to make stalking a crime, after David Maclean, the Home Office minister, invited the Labour MP Janet Anderson to discuss the issue with his civil servants.

Ms Anderson is drafting a private member's Bill to outlaw obsessive pursuit, usually of women by men, which falls short of intentional harassment or threatening behaviour.

She said that she got the impression from her meeting on Monday that the Home Office might back her measure "if it got the wording right".

The Home Office has resisted legislation against stalking, but has recently said that it is being considered. Last week, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, floated the idea of extending "non-molestation orders" which currently cover married and cohabiting couples, to cover stalking by strangers or work colleagues.

Lord Mackay's plan would be

a civil remedy, although it would give police the power to arrest people who breached orders. But the Government is under pressure to make stalking a criminal offence from some of its own backbenchers, as well as Labour, which wants to see a tougher message to men who can cause years of terror without touching their victims.

Ms Anderson, MP for Rossendale and Darwen, believes she has come up with a solution which will satisfy all sides, by creating a "hybrid" offence of stalking. Her Bill would make stalking a crime, but would also provide for civil orders banning perpetrators from going near their victims.

Tim Lawsoo-Cruttenden, a solicitor who is advising Ms Anderson, said the problem with making stalking a crime is that the stalker's intentions would have to be proved "beyond reasonable doubt". The test for obtaining a civil order would only be that on the "balance of probabilities" the stalker was reckless as to whether his actions caused distress or fear.

Her Bill is due to receive its Second Reading on 19 April. Prosecutions for intentional

harassment failed against Bernard Quinn for stalking the Princess Royal and Klaus Wagner for stalking the Princess of Wales, because of the difficulty of proving intent.

Ms Anderson told the Commons when she introduced her Bill earlier this month: "British women who have been stalked are frustrated by the inadequacy of British law. And while the targets of obsession go to suffering, police are frustrated and angry with the absence of a specific offence of stalking."

She said there were too many cases where women's lives had been "devastated by the actions of obsessive former partners, or sometimes complete strangers".

Under her Bill, stalking would be defined as a "course of behaviour" of molestation, pestering or following likely to harass, alarm or distress.

Ms Anderson said that the Conservative MPs Sir Ivan Lawrence and Lady Olga Maitland and Michael Shersby have indicated that they would support her Bill.

Her Bill is due to receive its Second Reading on 19 April.

Britain's bridges set to fail 40-tonne lorry limit

CHRIS BLACKHURST

Westminster Correspondent

Britain's motorway and trunk road bridges are unlikely to be ready in time to comply with an EU directive requiring them to be strong enough to carry 40-tonne trucks, says a report published today.

A study by the National Audit Office, the public spending watchdog of the Government's £2.2bn motorway and main road bridge repair and upgrading programme, found it has fallen behind schedule. Of the 1,241 bridges that need strengthening to meet the EU ruling, only a third have been

dealt with since the programme was launched in 1987.

To hit the deadline, the Highways Agency, the Department of Transport's road management organisation, must strengthen almost twice as many bridges in the next three years. "A marked acceleration is required . . . if the Highways Agency's aims are to be achieved." But the bridges are also crumbling. The number suffering "extensive deterioration" has gone up from 4 per cent since the programme began, to 7 per cent.

An added complication is the Government's squeeze on public spending. So far, some £700m has been spent and this year's allocation is £120m.

Future spending and the speed of the programme has been thrown into further doubt, though, by the last Budget in which Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, announced a tightening on funding for roads, building and maintenance.

"The Highways Agency's latest plans and targets . . . are being reassessed," noted the NAO.

The watchdog exposed a huge discrepancy in the cost of doing the work. In a survey of 173 bridges they found the costs charged by the agency's contractors ranged from £25 to £130 per square metre.



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MP in welfare warning to Blair

COLIN BROWN

Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair was urged last night by a leading backbench expert on social security not to adopt means-testing of child benefit and the state pension in Labour's fundamental review of the welfare state.

Chris Smith, Labour's social security spokesman, is looking at means-testing as part of Labour's review to reduce the burden of the welfare state under a Labour government.

As an alternative to means-testing, Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead, urged Labour to expand the role of the mutual aid societies, including building societies.

He called for the party to consider proposals by the mutual aid societies for a three-tier welfare state: a state-guaranteed minimum; the compulsory purchase of a comprehensive policy covering all main social security needs; and voluntary membership of top-up additional insurance coverage.

Mr Smith will publish policy papers on reform of the welfare state in May: on pensions, welfare to work, child benefit, efficiency savings, and a possible statement of principles.

Mr Field, chairman of the Commons select committee on social security, warned the Labour leadership that means-testing would leave the poor in a social security ghetto.

Accepting that the rising cost of the welfare state was not sustainable in the longer run, Mr Field forecast a "major disengagement". "The easiest and most popular way of achieving this outcome would be for a further disengagement from universal benefits, allowing the middle-class to order their own welfare provision and regressing the poor ever more into ghetto-type schemes," Mr Field said in the Aileen Lane Foundation memorial lecture.

Mr Eggar was pressed by the former Labour energy spokesman Martin O'Neill over the safety investigation launched after an emergency shutdown during refuelling at Heysham 2 power station, in Lancashire. Mr Eggar reminded MPs that the Heysham incident occurred as a fuel rod was being lowered into the reactor. Mr Field forecast a "major disengagement". "The easiest and most popular way of achieving this outcome would be for a further disengagement from universal benefits, allowing the middle-class to order their own welfare provision and regressing the poor ever more into ghetto-type schemes," Mr Field said in the Aileen Lane Foundation memorial lecture.

The Government was defeated last night in the Committee Stage of the Community Care (Direct Payments) Bill on plans to allow disabled people to buy care. About 700,000 people are now potentially eligible for the scheme - 20 times more than envisaged.

Major puts faith in attacking tactics

Faced with the claim Tory-controlled Westminster city council housed homeless families in asbestos-riddled tower blocks, John Major yesterday adopted the line of defence that he and his Government have made a standard tactic - find a Labour target.

Westminster may have put lives at risk in pursuit of its "homes-for-votes policy", as an independent report suggests, but what MPs should be concerned about is rents and empty council homes in Lambeth and Hackney. That was the Prime Minister's Question Time logic.

Mr Major went on to blame Labour for undermining confidence in British beef and the farming industry. And as an unsurprised Tony Blair pointed out, the same had occurred over the Scott report on arms-to-Iraq when Mr Major heaped opprobrium on Robin Cook, the shadow foreign secretary.

"Does he not realise this country expects him as Prime Minister to take responsibility?" the Labour leader asked.

□ PM targets Labour front bench □ Scaremonger claim over nuclear power

A report published on Monday on Hemes and Chantry Points in Paddington, west London, said danger warnings were ignored or played down by the Conservative group's leaders as they attempted to ensure like Labour voters were housed in Labour wards.

Raising the issue, Robert Wareing, Labour MP for Liverpool West Derby, noted that two weeks ago when he had asked about unemployment, Mr Major had "lambasted" Liverpool city council. "Will the Prime Minister now unequivocally condemn Tory Westminster council for risking the health of its people for political purposes by housing them in asbestos-ridden flats?"

Mr Major said the issue was "very properly" investigated by Westminster who had commissioned an independent report and taken action in the light of it. Almost drowned beneath Labour jeers, he suggested that

ster, and at Hackney, 10 times as great; and 21 times as many unoccupied dwellings in Lambeth and 23 times as many unoccupied dwellings in Hackney.

"Whose housing policies really are the disgrace?" Mr Major demanded to Tory cheers, the deeds of Dame Shirley Porter's old council swept aside.

Margaret Beckett, the shadow industry secretary, was the next to be accused of "scaremongering" when she called on the Government to halve the "folly" of its £2.6bn nuclear power sell-off.

Opening a Labour-initiated debate, Mrs Beckett said there was real fear a privatised nuclear power industry was likely to make "small erosions into safety margins for commercial gain". Tim Eggar, Minister for Energy, dismissed the claim as "pure scaremongering".

Mr Eggar was pressed by the former Labour energy spokesman Martin O'Neill over the safety investigation launched after an emergency shutdown during refuelling at Heysham 2 power station, in Lancashire.

Mr Eggar reminded MPs that the Heysham incident occurred as a fuel rod was being lowered into the reactor. Mr Field forecast a "major disengagement". "The easiest and most popular way of achieving this outcome would be for a further disengagement from universal benefits, allowing the middle-class to order their own welfare provision and regressing the poor ever more into ghetto-type schemes," Mr Field said in the Aileen Lane Foundation memorial lecture.

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MP in welfare warning to Blair

US anti-terror forum poised to miss target

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

The US will tomorrow convene a meeting of anti-terrorism experts to agree new approaches to the problem in the Middle East. But they are likely to find their different analyses undermine efforts to find agreement.

In Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, a diplomat who fancies himself as an expert on counter-terrorism speaks of the "revolutionary party one moment as a perfectly disciplined army, where the word of obeisance was supreme, and at another as if it had been the loosest association of desperate brigands that ever camped in a mountain gorge".

The security specialists from 29 countries, who will gather in Washington in a follow-up to the Sharm el-Sheikh conference assembled by President Clinton two weeks ago, are likely to show similar confusion in their analysis of terrorist groups and measures to counter them.

First, evidence that the CIA supported a bombing campaign by the Iraqi opposition – as revealed in the *Independent* this week – means that the moral

ground is muddy; second, the US leads the camp which sees terrorism as "a perfectly disciplined army", with its general headquarters in Iran. It has pointed its finger at Tehran ever since four suicide bombers from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the militant Palestinian Islamic movement, killed 62 people in Israel in nine days.

The problem with this thesis is that there is little evidence it is true; Hamas has traditionally drawn its support from Jordan. It is also in the nature of a suicide bombing that it requires little equipment, training or money. Iran may have been involved but the US has yet to produce evidence.

Despite this, the agenda of the Washington conference – it is to be followed by a meeting of foreign ministers on 14 April – will treat terrorism as the fruit of a single organisation.

Few European or Arab countries are happy with this. In so far as they have a picture of terrorists it is closer to the image of "an association of brigands". They see suicide bombs as the effect as much as the cause of a crumbling peace process.

President Clinton said: "The hard-won achievements of the

Palestinian people are under direct assault." But in the Palestinian refugee camps, from where the bombers came, few have seen any of these achievements or benefited from them.

France and Egypt say they want the Washington agenda to be broadened to include obstacles to peace other than terrorism, such as Israel's decision to seal off Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. France also wants the EU to co-chair the next meeting and the one after that to be held in Paris.

Israel was buoyed by the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. More than any other US president before, Mr Clinton hacked the Israeli position.

On Iran, the Israeli and US positions are the same. Shimon Peres, the prime minister, said: "Tehran has become the capital of terror." He has also been heartened by a slight recovery in the polls, but he remains vulnerable to another blow.

Sharm el-Sheikh took place in the immediate aftermath of the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem bombings. Its success will be difficult to repeat. Great powers have been organising meetings to oppose terrorism for over a century with little success. They

usually fail because the organisers see bombers and assassins as a minority who can be eliminated rather than the symptom of a broader political crisis.

Conferences like the one in Washington are also traditionally discredited by the large measure of hypocrisy involved. Iran may support Islamic Jihad, but the US admits to financing Iraqi opposition groups in Kurdistan which have, in turn, exploded bombs in the streets of Baghdad, killing more than 100 people in the past few years.

At heart, most countries have replied: "I will follow the advice you Americans gave Algeria in dealing with their problem." His point was that the US had advised Algerian leaders to talk to their Islamic fundamentalist rebels because they can never be crushed.

international

Tourists 'were killed for kicks'

ROBERT MILLIKEN
Sydney

Ivan Milat, the road-worker accused of killing two British women and five other young hitch-hikers, killed for "psychological gratification", the jury was told as his trial opened at the Supreme Court in Sydney yesterday.

The description came from Mark Tedeschini QC, for the prosecution. Mr Milat, 51, has pleaded not guilty to seven charges of murdering the British women, Caroline Clarke and Joanne Walters, both 22, two Australian teenagers and three Germans in their early twenties. They all disappeared while hitch-hiking south of Sydney between December 1989 and April 1992.

Mr Tedeschini gave the most concrete description so far of Mr Milat's alleged motives when he outlined the evidence of Paul Onions, a British engineer who is expected to be a star witness. In January 1990, Mr Onions, then 24, began hitch-hiking along the Hume Highway towards Melbourne.

The prosecution alleges that Mr Onions accepted a lift from Ivan Milat, who tried to rob and murder him. "The post-mortem evidence was that these were killings for killing's sake," Mr Tedeschini said. "The backpackers were killed with more ferocious force than was needed for killing. They were disposed of in a way which ensured their speedy disintegration."

After Mr Onions returned to Britain, reports of the disappearances of the backpackers prompted him to contact the New South Wales police. He went back to Australia in 1994, before Mr Milat's arrest, and showed police the spot where he was picked up and looked at police video images of 13 people.

Mr Tedeschini said: "The backpackers were killed with more ferocious force than was needed for killing. They were disposed of in a way which ensured their speedy disintegration."

After Ivan Milat's arrest in May 1994, police searched his house and those of two of his brothers. Mr Tedeschini told the jury that they found a bolt-trigger mechanism, spring and two magazines from a Ruger rifle in a wall cavity at Ivan Milat's house. The bolt, ballistic experts said, was the same that fired the 10 cartridge cases found near Caroline Clarke's body.

The trial continues.



Death on the street: The suicide bombing in Jerusalem on 25 February that killed 22 people

Photograph: AP

Tower of babble casts shadow over the greetings card game

It is my birthday and so far everyone has been most tactful. No unkind telephone calls from friends asking what it is like to be nearer to 40 than 30. Even the cards have been more or less innocent with the possible exception of the fat pink hippo from my two-year-old daughter.

Solace also presents itself in a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* for a book of short essays on maintaining one's personal equilibrium in a stress-filled world, one for each day of the year. It is called *Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy*.

The entry for my day is displayed as if just for me. "Why

Self-Confidence Can't Be Bought but Can Be Borrowed", reads the top of the page. There are quotes from Betty Davis and Eleanor Roosevelt, and this nugget of advice: "When you're unsure of yourself but life requires you to be otherwise, it is comforting to remember that you can always borrow a self-confident attitude from your authentic self". Pardon?

The shelves and airways of America are so crammed with self-help, babble that you might wonder why the entire country is not wildly happy and prosperous rather than hooked on Prozac and analysis. Among the books listed on last week's

NEW YORK DAYS

New York Times best-sellers' list was *Chicken Soup for the Soul* (stories meant to open the heart and rekindle the spirit – on the list for 77 weeks) and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (244 weeks).

Now even the greetings card industry is getting in on the mass-therapy act. Among those I received this morning, none were from Paramount Cards from Rhode Island. And for that, I am most profoundly grateful. On the whole, you do not want to be a recipient of a

Paramount card, pretty though they are, especially if it is from its new Paper Rainbow Press imprint.

The Paper Rainbow cards are apparently designed for people who have something delicate to communicate to their partner but somehow cannot find the words – or, more likely, the courage – to say it out loud. Buy enough of these cards and you could virtually hold an entire conversation with your loved one (or not) without opening your mouth. The relationship

would be unlikely to survive until the end, however.

With its water-colour of a pine forest and blue hills, there is a measure of irony in the fact that it is from its new Paper Rainbow Press imprint. "I think it's safe to say that most couples will argue over money at one point or other. But what troubles me is that with us, it seems to be more than just a minor source of conflict". Inside: "I'd hate to think that the issue of money could eventually come between us, especially when there are so many aspects of our relationship that are good. I know we've been over this many times before, but maybe it's best to end things now, before either one of us gets really hurt". Well thank you, darling.

Or for the couple fighting over who should pay the phone bill:

"I think it's safe to say that most couples will argue over money at one point or other. But what troubles me is that with us, it seems to be more than just a minor source of conflict". Inside: "I'd hate to think that the issue of money could eventually come between us, especially when there are so many aspects of our relationship that are good. I know we've been over this many times before, but maybe it's best to end things now, before either one of us gets really hurt". Well thank you, darling.

Featured – though in giggling tones – in *New York* magazine's most recent consumer column, the Paper Rainbow series also

includes a "We need more spontaneity" card and a "We need more common interests" card. There is even an in-laws card. "We have a problem that's been building... We both know what I'm talking about..."

I wonder if they have one protesting another year on the ageometer. Addressed to God: "You up there. We have a problem. You know it and I know it. You have to stop with this receding-hair-line, bulging-stomach, crashing-bank-account business. Quilt it, or it will be all over between us".

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David Usborne

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international

Paris and Bonn relaunch single currency plan

MARY DEJEVSKY

Laval

France and Germany yesterday made a concerted effort to relaunch economic and monetary union, saying it was economically necessary and politically possible. But the arrangements they set out spell trouble for Britain, because they would be used to create a two-tier EU.

The French Finance Minister, Jean Arthuis, said after a Franco-German summit that Bonn and Paris were determined to launch a single currency by the 1999 deadline laid down in the Maastricht Treaty. He said both countries were confident of the prospects for economic recovery and added that they were resolutely determined to reduce their public deficits. His counterpart, Theo Waigel, said the economic upturn was interrupted but Germany was not headed for a recession.

The two were meeting for their half-yearly council in Laval, 300 km west of Paris, where Mr Arthuis is mayor.

For the first time, the details of how monetary union might operate politically and in the foreign-exchange markets were spelt out. Mr Arthuis said France and Germany agreed on the need for a system governing exchange-rate relations between those who join a single European currency in 1999 and those who stay outside.

The exchange-rate mechanism would allow for "intervention by the European central bank, with the euro as the anchor-point," Mr Arthuis said. "We do not want to make way for competitive devaluations." And he called for a council of ministers from countries within monetary union to set eco-

dons are fulfilled in such a way to make the currency union a stability union." There has been little sign of enthusiasm for monetary union in the Bundesbank so far; it has expressed fears that if handled badly, it could create financial and economic turmoil.

But Mr Tietmeyer added that a "stability pact" was necessary for monetary union to be a success. This is a proposal to enforce strict curbs on public debt and deficits after EU nations form a single currency.

Mr Waigel emphasised that he felt automatic sanctions to punish nations that overstep the boundaries of the Maastricht Treaty criteria were the best way to ensure fiscal discipline. "I think automatic sanctions are better than if a group has to convene to make the decision."

The French Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, yesterday published instructions to ministers to ensure preparations for introducing the euro were in place in good time for the planned introduction of the coinage on 1 July, 2002. The instruction, issued days before the opening of the Intergovernmental Conference in Turin, seemed designed to reinforce the message conveyed by President Jacques Chirac in a newspaper article that France was politically and economically on course to meet the deadline for joining the currency.

French officials fear the countries on the edge of the single currency should not be able to profit from "competitive devaluation" — attracting jobs to their countries and buyers for their goods by reducing prices against the single currency and so placing the single-currency countries at a disadvantage.

BUILDING EUROPE

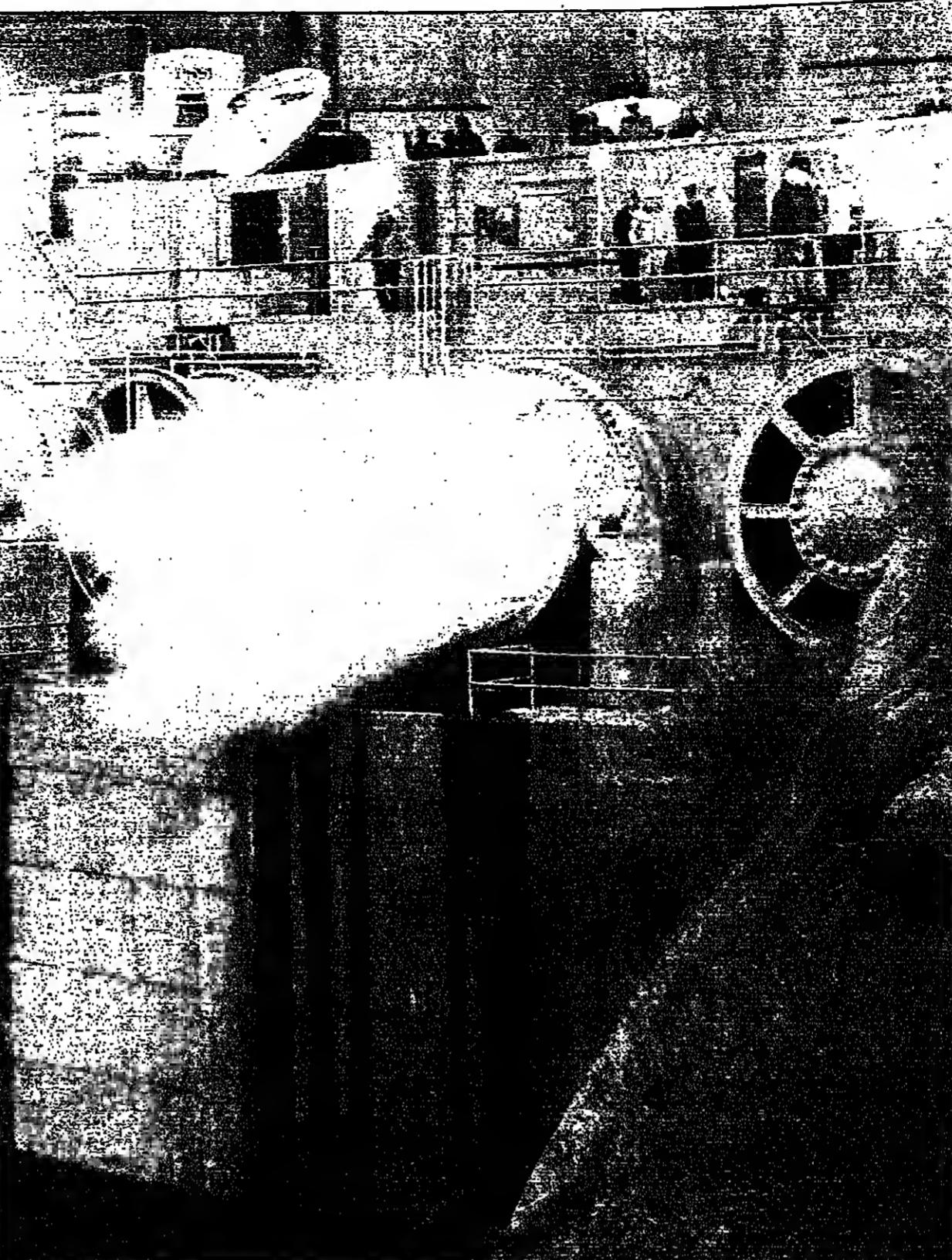
economic policy after a single currency had been launched. "We are talking about a council made up of ministers in the third phase (of European monetary union)."

Mr Waigel said any change in the timetable for Europe's monetary union could lead to problems on the foreign-exchange

market. "We plan to stick to the timetable, since everything else could lead to exchange-rate tensions."

Hans Tietmeyer, the Bundesbank president, also said the central bank supports monetary union and plans to meet the prescribed timetable. "I believe the start-date must be kept in the sense that the con-

ditions are fulfilled in such a way to make the currency union a stability union."



Turning on the tap: Water starting to pour from an 8ft tube at the base of Glen Canyon dam in Page, Arizona, in a first-time experiment on the flooding of the Colorado River, which runs through the Grand Canyon. Photograph: AP

London to Bordeaux in seven hours on new French railway

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Transport Correspondent

The creation of an integrated Europe-wide high-speed rail network moved a little closer yesterday with the announcement of the start of a range of new cross-border services.

SNCF, the French state railway, announced the launch from 2 June of a new high-speed service linking Paris with Brussels and Amsterdam. The trains will take just over two hours to the Belgian capital, cutting 40 minutes off the existing times and making it much more com-

petitive with air travel. Amsterdam will take four and three-quarter hours from Paris. However, when the Belgian high-speed line is completed in 1998, Paris-Brussels will take just one hour 25 minutes.

A red and grey fleet of trains, under the Thalys brand, has been introduced which can be used on French, Belgian and Dutch railways even though they have different electrical systems. A train which can also run to Cologne in Germany, which uses yet another voltage, is being introduced in 1998. SNCF hopes that within 10

Paris owns up to secret sculpture plot

MARY DEJEVSKY

Paris

years most of the large conurbations of north-west Europe will be linked by high-speed trains running at 300kph (186mph) on dedicated lines and 220kph (136mph) on up-graded conventional lines.

The 2 June launch date also sees the completion of the rail by-pass round Paris which opens the way for British travellers on Eurostar to reach cities on the TGV Atlantique line, such as Bordeaux and Nantes, with just one change at Lille. Bordeaux is five hours from Lille, while Nantes is just under four hours.

The exhibition was supposed to have been kept a secret. Paris commuters, the city council had hoped, would emerge from the Concorde and Champs Elysées metro stations one morning to be surprised and delighted by the sight before them.

But the secret was broken last weekend by a discreet announcement in the *Figaro* newspaper's colour magazine, which said that Parisians in the know were talking of nothing else and the secret would out.

Everyone wanted to know, the magazine said, how on earth a four-ton Picasso was going to be moved to a central Paris pavement, and how a

trick of lighting would make the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde appear in the middle of the road by Yves Klein.

A spokesman for Paris town hall yesterday confirmed that musings of this kind were not mere wishful thinking or premature April foolishness. The exhibition is to open on 11 April and last two months.

The works are to be arranged in chronological order and are presented as landmarks in the sculpture of this century. As well as the Picasso and the Klein, the exhibition will include three Rodins, a Miro, a Giacometti and a Léger. The British sculptors Henry Moore, Barbara

Hepworth and Helen Chadwick will also be represented.

The purpose of the exhibition is to celebrate the completion of a five-year project to restore the Champs Elysées as the promenade that its 17th-century architect intended. The road has been narrowed, the pavements widened — by more than 60 feet — and a second line of plane trees planted to give its lower reaches a more park-like feel.

The sculpture exhibition is intended not only to show off some of the most distinguished pieces of modern sculpture, but also to demonstrate that the Champs Elysées is once more for strolling.

Christine Ockrent resigns from top magazine

Paris — One of France's leading media figures, Christine Ockrent, resigned yesterday as director and editor in chief of *L'Express*, the nation's highest circulation weekly magazine, writes Mary Dejevsky. Her resignation came five months after a change in the magazine's ownership and a week after a statement by the new owners, part of the giant Havas group, that they wanted it to "become closer to the readers".

Although the author of the words, Christian Bregou of CEP Communications, denied that his remarks implied a change of editorial direction — down-market and away from the political and foreign coverage Ms Ockrent had favoured — his comment was widely interpreted as a sign that Ms Ockrent's days in the magazine's chair were numbered.

In a letter to staff yesterday, she said she was leaving "with head held high and a generous heart" but went on: "It is clear that the owners of *L'Express* have a different vision of what the magazine should be".

Ms Ockrent also presents an influential late-night political programme on one of France's two state-owned television channels. In a radical redesign of the magazine last autumn, she introduced more pictures and what was regarded at the time as a more "televisual" style of presentation. The changes were credited with increasing the magazine's readership by almost one-third.

The increase was not maintained, however, and year-end figures showed the left-of-centre *Nouvel Observateur* overtaking *L'Express* in domestic sales. Only *L'Express*'s foreign sales kept it at the top.

While editorial and personal differences — her strong and, some say, difficult personality divided the magazine's staff — are the immediate reason for Ms Ockrent's departure, her resignation is also a symptom of a gradual shift in the French media and business establishment as those associated with the political left give way to those more in tune with the prevailing political direction.

Although *L'Express* mostly seems politically neutral, if anything leaning slightly to the right, Ms Ockrent is associated with the left wing and married — like several leading French journalists — to a politician, Bernard Kouchner, the former socialist minister and founder of Médecins sans Frontières.

The new director of *L'Express* is expected to be Denis Jeambar, former head of the Europe 1 radio station.

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This week in

THE INDEPENDENT

on Monday

A new section focusing on Family Life, beginning with an investigation into how children's television is threatening the family unit. In the centre pages, each week we challenge the personalities and institutions that have become icons of Nineties life. On Monday, we ask: Do we need Start the Week? Plus: In the second part of our series on the making of the modern girl, we examine teenage attitudes to sex, relationships

and marriage, and in Sport A 24-page section with all the action from a big weekend of sport. Plus: Part one of a major investigation into the crisis afflicting English cricket. Where does our summer game go from here? And the Monday interview with Alan Shearer, the striker who doesn't mind not scoring goals for England.

on Tuesday

Part three of the making of the modern girl: how the Nineties generation gets what it wants. Plus: Health — a new treatment for chronic fatigue.

Also on Tuesday, fashion, architecture, visual arts and media. Our new back pages section introduces a weekly feature on the history of popular culture.

on Wednesday

Theatre, midweek travel section, your money, finance and law. Plus — Final part of the making of the modern girl: what the future holds for the teenager of the Nineties

In our back pages, Martin Newell, Britain's leading rock poet, and Neil Kerber, one of the country's funniest cartoonists, present their views of the modern world.

on Thursday

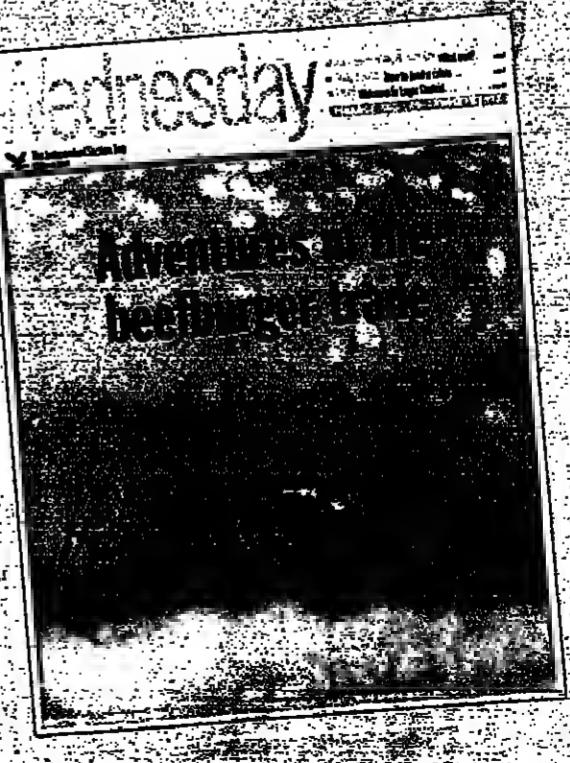
All our regular features, including Dilemmas, John Walsh's column, plus film, education and graduate

plus. In the back pages, William Hartston's history of the world in 10½ inches

on Friday

24Seven — a brand new 20-page pull-out-and-keep entertainment and listings section. Including a complete day-by-day planner for the week ahead, plus

seven-day TV, radio and satellite listings, ticket offers and informed comment on the week's highlights.



Christine Ockrent resigns from top magazine

Subversion law causes Slovak uproar

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Bratislava

Amid furious accusations of a revival of Communist repression, the Slovak parliament yesterday ratified a controversial new law aimed at protecting the state against subversion.

The debate on the so-called Law on the Protection of the Republic provoked uproar on opposition benches, where speakers denounced it as a throwback to the legislation of the Communist era and a fur-

ther blow to Slovakia's already tarnished international image.

Opposition deputies banged their desks and jeered as news came through that the law had been approved by a margin of 77 to 57. Peter Weiss, leader of the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), said the law would limit freedom of expression, assembly and information and promised to challenge it in the constitutional court.

Other speakers compared some of the law's provisions with a similar "anti-subversion"

measure passed in 1948 by the Communist government of the then Czechoslovakia.

Under the law, technically an amendment to the criminal code, Slovak citizens could face two years' imprisonment if found guilty of "disseminating false information abroad damaging to the interests of the republic".

Other clauses point to stiff penalties for organisers of public rallies judged to be aimed at subverting the constitutional system, territorial integrity or

defence capability of the country.

The government insists that the law complies with accepted international norms, but critics say the vagueness of its wording leaves it open to a wide variety of interpretation and that, in the wrong hands, it could be used to silence opposition.

Western diplomats, some of whom in the past have openly questioned Slovakia's progress towards democracy, have also sought clarification of the new legislation.

The Law on the Protection of the Republic is one of a package of tough new laws believed to be part of a deal agreed between the Prime Minister, Vladimir Meciar, and the far-right Slovak National Party (SNS), a junior partner in his ruling coalition.

In return for Mr Meciar's agreement to introduce the new measures, nationalists agreed to support his attempt to win parliamentary backing for a Basic Treaty with Hungary

agreed in principle just over a year ago. Last night the treaty, which was approved by the Hungarian parliament last summer, was ratified by Slovak MPs by 119 to 1.

Under the Basic Treaty, Hungary accepts the inviolability of its border with Slovakia in return for guarantees from the government in Bratislava.

Ethnic Hungarian leaders say that a law passed late last year enshrining Slovakia as the only official language clearly goes against the spirit of the treaty. They are also alarmed by the new anti-subversion law,

fearing that it will be used against them.

international

IN BRIEF

The Queen pledges support for Poland

Warsaw — The Queen assured Poles yesterday that Britain would support their efforts to join the European Union and Nato.

While welcoming the Basic Treaty, representatives of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia remain extremely mistrustful of the government in Bratislava.

Ethnic Hungarian leaders say that a law passed late last year enshrining Slovakia as the only official language clearly goes against the spirit of the treaty. They are also alarmed by the new anti-subversion law,

fearing that it will be used against them.

Shrine siege ends

Srinagar — About 17 armed separatist guerrillas ended a two-day occupation of Kashmir's holiest shrine last night, leaving the buildings peacefully after an agreement with the Indian government. A rebel spokesman denied the guerrillas had surrendered. *Reuter*

Russians accused

Vienna — Russian soldiers have used excessive force, and engaged in robbery, looting and arson in their offensive against rebels in Chechnya, said a report by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which also criticised the rebels for hostage-taking. *AP*

77-year exile ends

Vienna — The government ended a 77-year-long entry ban on two aged sons of Austria's last emperor, Karl I, who abdicated in 1919, agreeing to issue them with valid passports. *AP*

President testifies

Bogota — The Colombian President, Ernesto Samper, testified yesterday in a widening investigation that could lead to his impeachment on charges that his 1994 election campaign was bankrolled by drug lords. *Reuter*

Carter aide dies

Washington — Edmund Muskie, former Secretary of State under President Carter, died yesterday at 81 after a heart attack. He was briefly a contender for the presidential nomination in 1972. *Reuter*

Obituary, page 16

Bahrain firing squad

Manama — A Bahraini anti-government protester, found guilty of murdering a police sergeant last year, was executed by firing squad. *Reuter*

She雷 ambition

Bonn — The American feminist Shere Hite said she has become a German citizen and may use her new status to run for the European parliament. *Reuter*



Capital losses: The remains of a Kabul street. The government is said to be preparing an attempt to drive rebels beyond artillery range of the city

Photograph: Tom Pilston



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	£6,000	13.9%	£202.66	£7,295.76
BARCLAYS	£3,000	17.9%	£106.42	£3,831.12
	£6,000	17.9%	£212.84	£7,662.24
NAT WEST	£3,000	16.9%	£105.05	£3,781.80
	£6,000	15.9%	£207.54	£7,471.44
ABBEY NATIONAL	£3,000	16.9%	£105.05	£3,781.80
	£6,000	15.9%	£207.54	£7,471.44

AP's correct at 18/03/96.

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**Whenever
you're ready
to talk,
we're ready
to listen.**

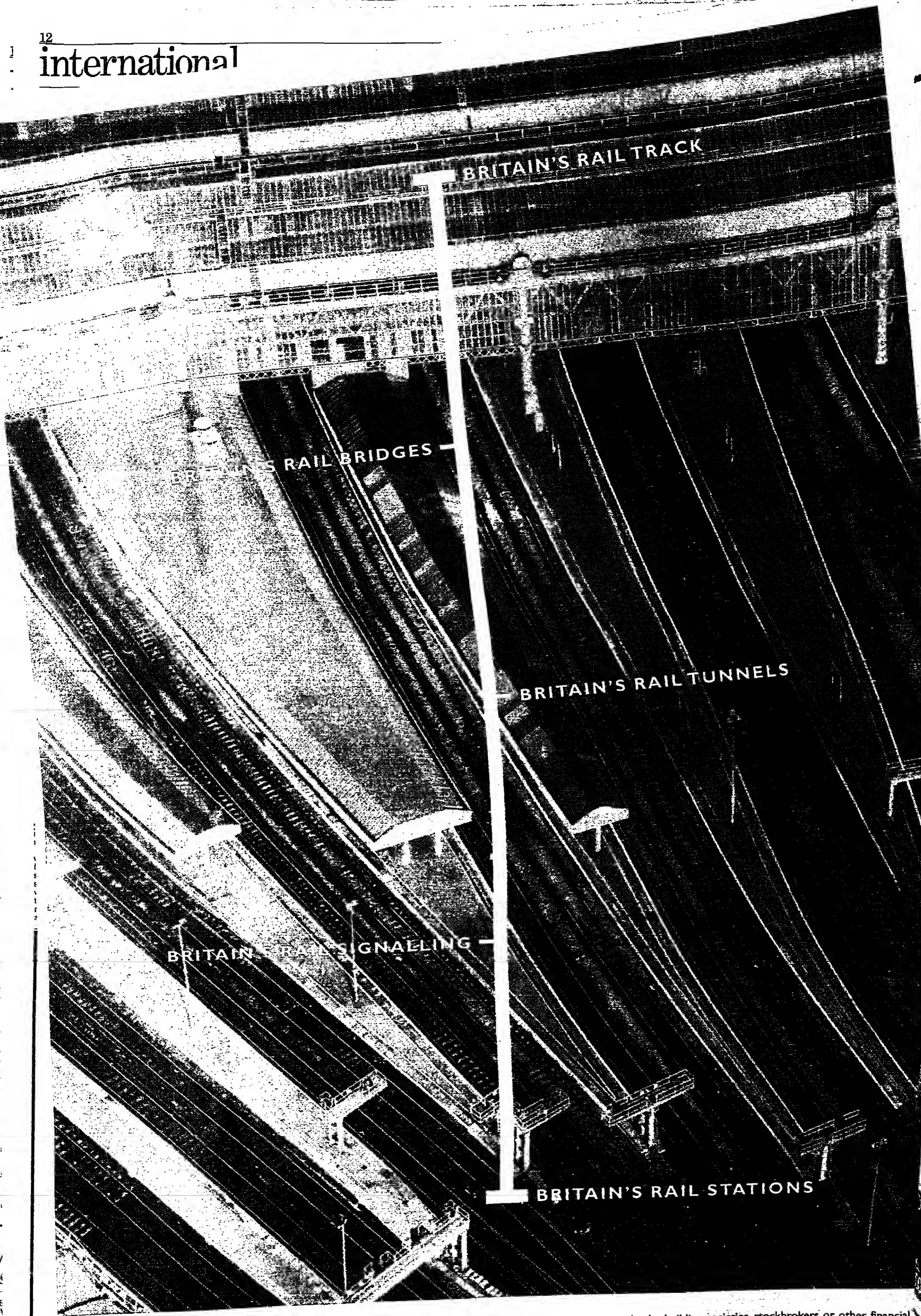
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men kidnap
Cambodia

1000

GAR

Charles Arthur traces the discovery of the agent that is accused of spreading BSE from cows to humans

The killer protein

A simple protein, rather like those you find in eggs or in the cells of any animal's body, is eating away at Britain's beef industry, threatening it with destruction. Known as a 'prion', this mysterious protein lies behind the unfolding BSE crisis. For it is the 'prion' which seems to explain why humans may contract the fatal brain disease Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) as a result of eating food contaminated with mad cow disease, or BSE.

Prions are 'rogue' forms of normal proteins. They defy conventional scientific knowledge. We know that they work to terrifying effect on the brain, eating it away and turning it into sponge. What we cannot explain yet is how they work.

Prions act in the place where chemistry and geometry intersect. Many scientists now think that CJD and BSE diseases are not triggered by a conventional infection caused by a virus or bacteria. Instead it seems they are set off by an entirely new infectious mechanism: a protein that abruptly changes shape, like a child's bendy toy, which then sets off a disastrous chain reaction in other cells.

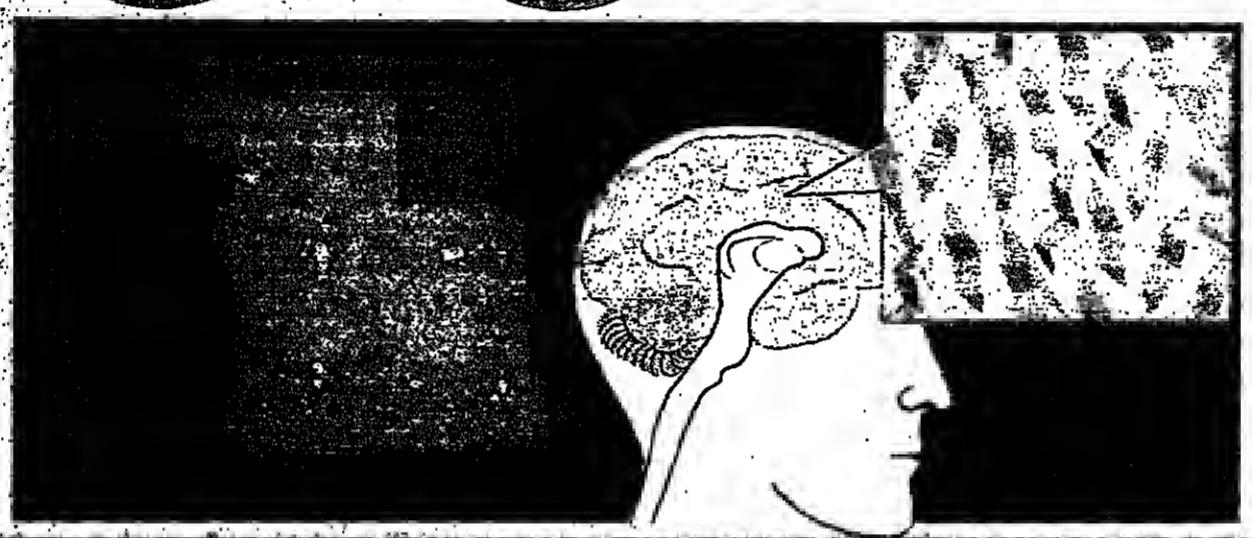
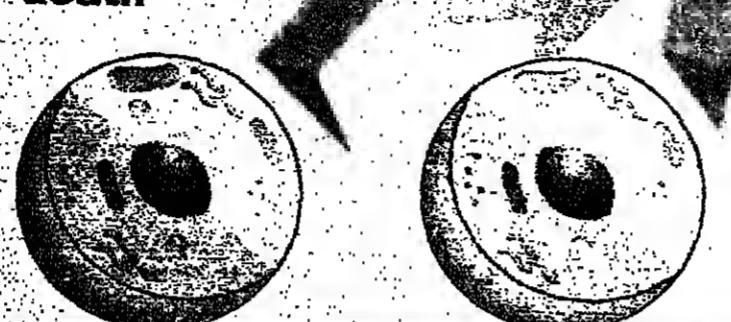
BSE, CJD and scrapie - the form of the disease takes in sheep - differ significantly from the sorts of diseases we learn about at school. Conventional thinking says infectious diseases are caused by bacteria and viruses - living agents with their own genetic instructions encoded in DNA (or its chemical and genetic relative, RNA). They invade a host cell and their genetic material sets that cell to work making copies of the invading cells, which then infect more host cells.

The first step in the discovery of the entirely different infectious mechanism came in 1957, when two scientists studying tribes in Papua New Guinea noted a disease that the natives called *taru*, or 'the laughing death'. It was a disorder in which loss of co-ordination was rapidly followed by dementia and death. It was spread because the tribespeople indulged in ritual cannibalism. But the scientists' research found no infectious agent to explain the disease. The first clue that something else was at work was a strange sponge-like appearance to the victim's brains.

That same sponge-like appearance is found in cows that die of BSE. Here too the infectious agent is elusive - yet incredibly hardy. You can do a lot to infected tissue samples:煮 them in antiseptics, boil them in water, shine ultraviolet light or even high-energy gamma rays on them. Any one of those would destroy a bacterium or a virus. But not BSE, CJD or scrapie.

The turning point in the understanding of these diseases came in 1972. Stanley Prusiner, a neurologist

Prions: when changing shape means death



The prion is a standard protein that changes shape - apparently spontaneously - and then causes brain degeneration and death.

1) The normal form of the PrP protein exists in the 'folded' shape in many cells of the body. Its exact function is unknown.

2) Somehow, the protein 'flips' to a stretched form. Because it originates in the body, the defence mechanism of the white blood cells does not break it down. The 'flipped' PrP, or prion protein, now begins to affect the normal version in other cells in the body.

3) 'Flipped' copies of the PrP protein gather in brain cells, where they cause fibrous deposits - 'plaques' - which cause the cells to die and collapse.

4) Post-mortem examination shows how the collapsed cells leave the brain with a sponge-like appearance, shot through with holes.

How we might catch CJD from BSE

1) Meal infected with prions from a cow with BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) is eaten.

2) Prion proteins that cause BSE in cattle are absorbed through the stomach wall.

3) Over a period of time - which may be between 10 and 30 years - the prion protein spreads throughout the body and 'encourages' normal copies of the same protein in the body to change shape to the diseased form.

4) Diseased forms of the prion protein begin to gather in the brain and spinal tissues, where they lead to degeneration of the grey matter. Eventually CJD sets in, leading to dementia and death within a year or two.

Graphic: Jim Pavlidis

at the University of California's school of medicine in San Francisco, watched one of his patients die from CJD. Upset, but intrigued, he began reading the scientific literature on CJD and related conditions - which he found electrifying. Finding the infectious agent became his life's work.

After setting up a laboratory in 1974, it took Prusiner and his colleagues eight years to establish two facts: the infectious agent involved in these diseases was unaffected by any process that would destroy DNA or RNA, yet it lost its effect when treated with substances that broke down proteins.

In his first significant publication on the topic, in 1982, he dubbed the agent a 'prion' (he pronounces it 'pre-on', though most people find 'pre-on' easier on the ear), for 'proteinaceous infectious particle'. His research team subsequently established that the scrapie prion contained only one protein, which they dubbed PrP - for 'prion protein'.

Prusiner's iconoclastic suggestion that something without any genetic element could cause an infectious illness 'evoked a good deal of scepticism', he observes. There was also the question of where PrP came from in the first place. That was answered when scientists found in cells as part of the body's self-regulation. Enzymes are like locks: only the correct shape of protein fits them. Experiments at the University of California showed that 'scrapie' PrP resisted being broken down by protease enzymes, while normal healthy PrP did not. Chemically they were the same protein but geometrically they were different shapes. A build-up of diseased PrP proteins, then, would throw a body's self-regulation out of kilter because they are *immune* to enzymes.

Prusiner could not explain why the 'scrapie' PrP had a different shape, and more importantly why it seemed able to encourage other proteins to change shape as well. Prusiner decided to investigate other 'prion diseases' in humans.

In 1988, he obtained copies of a PrP gene from a man with a disease, known as Gerstmann-Sträussler-Scheinker disease, which resembles CJD. Prusiner's team found a tiny mutation in the man's gene. Out of 750 'instructions' - called base pairs - on the gene's DNA, a single

one was unusual. This meant that instead of making the amino acid proline, as a healthy PrP gene would, it made one called leucine. That, in turn, meant that the PrP protein was a different shape. As long as your PrP protein retain the correct shape, you will remain healthy.

But even after painstaking research over many years, there were still the twin questions of how the infection was spread and how it worked inside a body. Why could 'scrapie' PrP easily infect some animals, such as mice, sheep or cows, yet it hard to pass to others such as hamsters?

Prusiner, with fellow researcher Michael Scott, found that the amino acid sequences of cow and sheep PrP proteins are relatively similar. Prusiner suggests that 'the more the sequence of a scrapie PrP molecule resembles the PrP sequence of its host, the more likely it is that the host will acquire prion disease.'

Human PrP genes and proteins differ quite substantially from those of cattle, but not by so much that it rules out BSE passing from cows to humans.

The key to the way the disease spreads through the body is the way PrP changes shape and induces other proteins to follow suit. Experiments at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have shown that when diseased PrP and normal sheep PrP are mixed in a test tube, the normal form converted to the diseased form. There might then be a cascade effect as more and more proteins change shape.

It is known that they become concentrated in the spinal cord and the brain. This concentration of the diseased protein causes cells to die. The collapse of the cells creates the spongey appearance of the brain in post-mortem.

But how many 'diseased' proteins are needed to set off the cascade? How long does it take? Can the 'flipped' BSE prion induce the normal human prion to flip? To these vital questions, even the crusading Prusiner does not have the answers, yet.

Human PrP genes and proteins differ quite substantially from those of cattle, but not by so much that it rules out BSE passing from cows to humans

Prusiner discovered several animals - hamsters, mice, cats, elk, mink, sheep and humans - have genes that control the making of PrP.

But if we all produce PrP, why doesn't everyone die of CJD? One interpretation was that we had made a terrible mistake and that PrP had nothing to do with prion diseases," Prusiner said later. But

then he recalled that the biological action of most proteins depends on their physical shape - the way their molecular constituents are folded together. (Why proteins, which start as long, simple chains of amino acids manufactured by genes, spontaneously fold into the shapes they

do remains one of the greatest unsolved mysteries in modern biology.)

Prusiner's next step was to suggest that there could be two shapes of PrP: the normal form found in healthy mammals and the diseased, 'scrapie' form. This was confirmed by experiments with enzymes called proteases, which break down pro-

teins found in cells as part of the body's self-regulation. Enzymes are like locks: only the correct shape of protein fits them. Experiments at the University of California showed that 'scrapie' PrP resisted being broken down by protease enzymes, while normal healthy PrP did not. Chemically they were the same protein but geometrically they were different shapes. A build-up of diseased PrP proteins, then, would throw a body's self-regulation out of kilter because they are *immune* to enzymes.

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Mr Creutzfeldt's big moment

Word reaches me from a young man particularly distressed by the latest CJD scare. While going quietly about his business for the London auctioneers Christie's all week, people keep accosting him to demand if he has something to do with the beef scare. 'And then I have to come clean,' confesses one Benjamin Creutzfeldt, 'that it was my grandfather who first diagnosed the whole thing.'

The young Mr Creutzfeldt, long familiar with his grandfather's work, has been so put out by the latest coverage of the disease that he has taken to writing to the papers.

'I'm no scientist myself,' he concedes, 'but the first case my grandfather diagnosed was back in 1913. And it was a woman aged only 23 - which does rather make you wonder why we are reading so much into cases of young people today.'

I for one am inclined to be most reassured. Soothing words from a Creutzfeldt himself!

Alas, there is a nasty sting in the tail. 'The only thing is,' he admits, 'she was a hatcher's daughter.'

The CJD scare has brought Benjamin one unexpected benefit. 'For the first time in my life, suddenly everyone can spell my name.'

With Kylie you can burn in Hull

One can only speculate about the music to which one burns in hell. What we do now know is the music to which one burns in Hull. It is Kylie Minogue's chart-topping single, 'I Should Be So Lucky'.

The local council has been forced to employ an extra technician at the city crematorium to cope with the strain, since the people of Hull are increasingly choosing their favourite pop tunes to accompany them to the

DIARY



other side instead of more traditional hymns. According to John Le Neveu, the assistant director of leisure services, 'it has created a lot of work, making sure the tapes are set up correctly and so have had to employ another technician.'

The alternative to Kylie (above) is 'Simply the Best' by Tina Turner, although one man decided to be more literal and was accompanied

into the furnace by the inevitable line from Frank Sinatra's 'My Way': 'And so I face the final curtain.'

Krays were a bunch of lightweights

Rifling through old programmes at a party for the 125th birthday of the Royal Albert Hall, I was interested in one long-forgotten event, an International Boxing Tournament in December 1951. The night was unusual in having three brothers fighting on the same bill, the only time the three did so. One's heart

goes out to their opponents. The bruisers were the welterweight Charlie Kray and the lightweights Reggie and Ronnie of the same surname.



Nice one, Selina

Guests at the British Television Advertising Awards were somewhat startled to hear Selina Scott announce the

winners of the prize for public service advertising.

Many years in front of the camera have still, it seems, not wisdom the winsome presenter to the perils of the autocue. Up on her screen came the results - last Christmas's controversial 'Dave' anti-drink drive ad, made for the Department of Transport and the COI - the Central Office of Information.

'And the winner is...' she declared, 'CO One!'

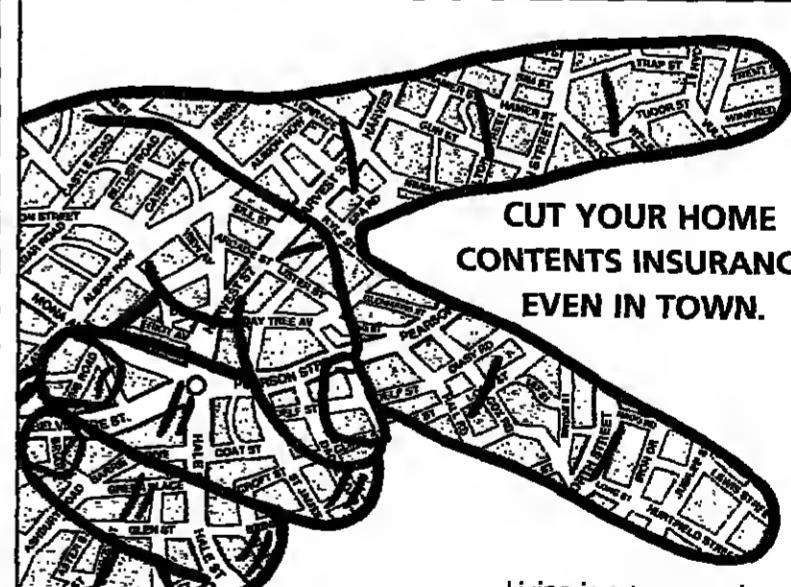
A bemused audience was left marvelling at the audacity of a Department of Transport ad campaign to promote the virtues of carbon monoxide.

Great advert, shame about the facts ...

No advertising award for the hoarding that the Scottish Widows insurance company has put up in Edinburgh.

It boasts that Sir Walter Scott wrote *Ivanhoe*. True. It adds that he sold books by the million. Also true. It concludes with a flourish that he took out a policy with Scottish Widows. Indeed he did: a policy for £3,000 on 20 December 1824. What it neglects to say is that he went bankrupt two years later.

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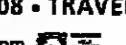
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Punishments to fit the criminal

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, is his own worst enemy. Yesterday, he had some moderately good news to impart: the third annual fall in recorded crime. Yet even as he delivered the news you could see his credibility draining away. Every one's natural reaction was to ask: where's the catch? That must be the inappropriate response since these new figures, welcome as they are, present such a mixed picture that they give no endorsement to Mr Howard's dogmatic penal disciplinaryism.

Detecting and deterring crime is much more complicated than this Home Secretary seems able to admit. Mr Howard seeks to persuade us that crime is governed by straightforward causal relationships. More police on the beat make more arrests and clear up more crimes. Judges, constrained by a tougher sentencing regime laid down by Mr Howard, send more offenders to prison, where they learn the error of their ways. Crime falls: simple as that.

The trouble is, it isn't. Making society safer for law-abiding citizens requires a joint effort by the public and the police, local authorities and companies, the courts and social services. The police are most effective when they act as a catalyst for the public doing more for themselves to police society. Prison is only one form of punishment: we should start to think more imaginatively about other forms of punishment that could be delivered in the community.

The figures published yesterday covered "notifiable offences". These are crimes recorded on police station dockets and fed through the statistical mills. They do not cover much of the crime people experience in their homes or on the streets, much of which goes unreported. Vehicle crime, on official definitions, is down; so is burglary. Yet most people are unlikely to say they feel safer than they did three years ago. Worse, in 1995 there were more homicides and a worrying pick-up in crime on the railways. Muggings rose but sexual offences fell. Yet the figures are no cause for cheer: about 100 women a week reported rapes last year.

Movements in the level of recorded crime may not tell us a great deal about which policies are most effective. It may

tell us more about the way crime is reported and recorded. It also tells us something about demographic change. As the population ages, so crime should fall because older people get up to less mischief.

Fighting crime is not unlike fighting unemployment. There is no single unemployment problem but lots of them: the redundant, older, unskilled manual worker is not in the same position as a temporarily unemployed, young, skilled worker. There are also many crime problems: burglaries and vehicle crime demand different responses compared with violent crimes against women. We do not need blanket solutions for "crime"; we need a more forensic approach that distinguishes between offences and wrongdoers and applies to them appropriate schemes of detection, punishment and prevention.

Some of the big sweep schemes in which the Metropolitan Police have led the way – such as Operation Bumblebee – seem to have had some success, usually by heightening public awareness and strengthening the bond between police and public on which effective crime fighting depends. Sir Trevor Morris, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, says closed-circuit television is having some effect, though it may merely displace crime into adjacent areas.

The crime is, if we locked up a huge proportion of the age group most often implicated in crime, offending would be cut but civil liberties and the public finances would also be ruined. In the real world, policy ought to be targeted at reducing reoffending rates, and exploring more effective routes to make sure young, first-time offenders do not return to crime. These must include a range of non-custodial training and education regimes as well as exploring novel forms of punishment in the community. Tomorrow, Mr Howard announces a new sentencing regime that is likely to ignore not just the objections of judges to straitjacket sentences but the anguish – audible this week at their conference – of the prison governors at the growing strains on the prisons. If he uses these crime figures to justify his policies Mr Howard's political credibility will be visible to all.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Beef: 'meat products' may be infected, but only a few people will ever get CJD

Sir: Here are the answers to the questions about BSE/CJD which you posed on the front page on Saturday 23 March.

1. One bite of infective (brain) material might be enough to transmit the disease because it is close-related but that is unlikely.

In any case, most individuals will never develop CJD since only those of a rare genotype are susceptible.

2. Recent research on BSE suggests that beef liver is unsafe.

3. There is no evidence that the "red meat" of BSE-infected animals is any less wholesome than that of Scrapie-infected sheep, whose meat we have been swallowing with impunity since 1730. It is the "meat products" (pâté, meat pies, stock cubes and tinned items of "beef" such as consommé and stew) to which brains have been – and calves' brains still are – added which contain the organism.

4. Farmers no doubt watch their pigs but all subclinically infected animals appear quite healthy for years.

5. All poultry appear to be immune. The SEAC researchers are playing safe in barring all mammalian meat from all farm animals.

6. This is not going to be what everybody understands by an "epidemic": we are not dealing with typhoid or tuberculosis or cholera in which everybody indiscriminately gets contaminated. This unique organism causes disease in only a few individuals – those who are genetically susceptible. That's why CJD, in spite of being an infection, is so rare.

H C GRANT, MD, FRCP (Neuropathologist)
Edinburgh

Sir: Professor Woodland's letter on Scrapie/BSE (23 March) states that "posture remains infective for some years after [scrapie infected] sheep are removed."

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-393 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk)
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

This leads me to ponder why the disposal of BSE infected carcasses is permissible in landfill sites (not all incinerated) which are not unknown for their production of polluted effluents?

Incidentally, how efficacious are the incinerators employed for carcass destruction and what competent authority spot checks them for their performance in completely destroying tissues, flesh and bones, so that only sterile ash remains? This structure also applies to open pit burning, which cannot guarantee complete destruction.

A further complicating factor is that abattoir wastes can be spread on or in agricultural land (as "soil improvers"). This may be cheap waste disposal but where are the guarantees of environmental and biological safety from these procedures? Deregulation can be carried too far and insecure disposal of any biologically active animal wastes or remains is the last thing we need.

Professor A PORTERSON
Professor of Environmental
Engineering
The Open University
Milton Keynes

Sir: The English Channel is a wonderful thing. In spite of hundreds of thousands of British cattle passing over the Channel over the past ten years, there is apparently no problem with BSE in France and elsewhere. What complete nonsense.

We are now faced with major

countries in the EU abandoning the UK to the potential economic catastrophe of mass cattle incineration while hypothetically ignoring the widespread unreported problem in France, Germany and elsewhere.

The difference is that in the UK we fully compensate any farmer for a BSE victim (which is then destroyed) thereby encouraging the farmer to be

Sir: The Government encourages us both to disregard the low risk of contracting CJD and to accept the low chance of winning the Lottery.

ROBERT PIGACHE
Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Sir: In Cornwall we had clear night skies over the weekend, enabling us to see the approaching comet Hyakutake with the naked eye: it was a fine sight. Comets were always viewed as bringers of disaster, and this one's arrival has coincided almost to the day with the BSE scare.

N J LENNON
Newquay, Cornwall

Sir: The Government encourages us both to disregard the low risk of contracting CJD and to accept the low chance of winning the Lottery.

ROBERT PIGACHE
Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Sir: The Student Loans Company has acknowledged and apologised for the problems which resulted from the introduction of a revised application procedure for loans in the autumn of 1994.

Your report (22 March) fails to put these problems into perspective. The delays – whilst undeniably serious – affected a small proportion of students. The problems were short-lived: they were fully resolved by 15 January 1995.

22. When you heard of British Airways' decision to ban British beef from in-flight meals, did you think to yourself: "As it's impossible to tell one kind of meat from another in airline meals, I don't really see the point of banning anything particular."

23. When you last picked up a jar of Bovril, did you wonder if there was such a thing as mad beef drink disease?

24. Have you stopped saying things like "yours, till the cows come home" and "beefing things up"?

25. Do you attribute Ian Botham's recent failure to get into cricketing admin to his nickname of "Beefy"?

26. The next time someone brings up the question of why dinosaurs vanished from the earth, will it suddenly occur to you: "Of course – Mad Dinosaur to you!"

27. Thus cleverly getting the incriminating evidence destroyed by the very animals it is accused of having affected?

28. But how do we know that mad cow disease might not be caused by

honest and open. Elsewhere there is no such compensation and hence if a farmer is at all concerned about an animal, his best option is to send it to the abattoir. Under these circumstances, one could argue that British production is safer and that the consumer is better protected with UK products.

PIERS FEILDEN
Marlborough, Somerset

Sir: Following reports in the *Lancet* of CJD in British teenagers (October 1995) I wrote to my son's headmaster suggesting that a non-beef alternative be always available. It is to the credit of Clifton College that they adopted this proposal at once. I am up to my horror, to my horror, that pork sausages can legally contain up to 20 per cent beef, and that ingredient labelling is not required by law, so those parents who have been enlightened enough to ignore government reassurances on BSE now find that they have been misled by inadequate controls on the labelling of food products.

Dr ROBIN RUSSELL JONES, FRCP
Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire

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Sir: Christian Socialism, you imply (leading article, 22 March), is doomed. Methodism, and Church attendance, is on the decline and the broad tradition into which Tony Blair has tapped

Churches fight social evils

Sir: Your obituary of civil Christians (22 March) is premature. I have visited 26 cities in the last two years and can report that the churches are heavily engaged in helping the casualties of our rapidly deteriorating society.

Everywhere I've been the Church Urban Fund, set up following Sir Richard O'Brien's *Faith in the City* report, is doing great work; but today we are also creating networks across the denominations, in which the new Community churches play a leading part, full of Christian love and enthusiasm and often more generous with funds and people than older churches.

For all this there is broad support. Two years ago I made the case for the city networks at seminars in seven of the five-day Spring-Harvest/Word Alive conferences. Since then 11 cities have started networks and most of the rest are following, pooling our knowledge and experience across the country in dealing with among other things, homeless teenagers, drug addiction, battered wives, single mothers, debt, and helping the demotivated young to find jobs. I think that my predecessor, the great Earl of Shaftesbury, would have approved.

Sir FRED CARTERWOOD
President
The Evangelical Alliance
London SE11

Sir: Christian Socialism, you imply (leading article, 22 March), is doomed. Methodism, and Church attendance, is on the decline and the broad tradition into which Tony Blair has tapped

CHRIS BRYANT
The Christian Socialist
Movement London N1

English Heritage to the rescue

Sir: I am most grateful to Anna Pavord for highlighting the plight of Downe Hall, Bridport (23 March).

In the past few days a knight in shining armour has been sighted on the horizon in the unlikely guise of English Heritage, previously part of the nothing-doing/do-nothing brigade.

English Heritage, until last week deaf to all our appeals, has now reversed its policy towards Downe Hall and is starting to work out how to preserve the house and its gardens. It gives fresh hope to us all when a

CAROLINE SANDWICH
(the Countess of Sandwich)

Dorset Gardens Trust

Beaminster, Dorset

75

Feeling good with fewer people

Sir: Why should a falling population after the year 2000 give the Chancellor of the day a "feel-bad problem"? ("Feel-bad factor predicted as population falls", 22 March). A slowly falling population would naturally lead to a disappearing housing shortage and falling costs together with falling unemployment, reduced congestion, reduced pollution, and a falling import bill. The pressures of intensive farming on food quality and wildlife could more easily be reduced. It would become possible to stop gobbling up countryside in urban "development", and much more.

Most of these are benefits in any terms. Some appear as negatives only in the false accounting of conventional economics, which measures all exchange of money as a "good", even if the "good" is the medical care of road accident victims, or scraping oil off beaches.

CHRISTOPHER PADLEY
Green Party Population
Policy Working Group
Market Rasen, Lincolnshire

76

Irish kept Greek classics alive

Sir: If further examples are needed to convince those who continue to believe the Irish were backward people, I suggest they read Johannes Scotus, John the Scot. (In the ninth century "Scotus" means Irishman).

The excellence of his translation work was remarked upon by Anastasius, the librarian of Pope Nicholas, in 860, who was astonished that a man from a remote and barbarous country could have possessed such a profound knowledge of Greek.

Throughout what we call the "dark ages" there is evidence that the knowledge of Greek and the Latin classics was kept alive by the Irish.

"During the latter part of the seventh century, it was in Ireland that the thirst for knowledge was keenest, and the work of teaching was most actively carried on" (M R James).

TIM CRAIG
Oswestry, Shropshire

77

Who's this Jakob, and where's the Beefy?



MILES KINGTON

How much do you know about beef by now? Here's a small test, just to find out.

1. How well have you been following the debate on the beef crisis in the last few days?

a) Well, quite well;

b) Well, I'm a dairy farmer from Somerset and I don't believe there is a beef crisis, only a beef panic, and I've never had any BSE in my herd, well, I have, but I didn't tell anyone, and what I say is this ...

2. How many of you have been reading the headlines and thought there was an EU ban on British beef, and that JCD probably stood for "John Courage Disaster"?

3. What are the main symptoms of JCD?

a) An increasing inability to follow Stephen Dorrell's arguments;

b) A tendency to believe that there is a town in Germany called Beefburg;

c) A horrible feeling that the more you learn about beef the less you know?

4. How convinced are you of the link between BSE and Jakob Creutzfeld Disease?

5. Who was this Jakob Creutzfeld?

6. Why do people with German names get to discover all the most fas-

processes of the feed industry, which minced up diseased sheep to feed to cows, and that although this has now been stopped, we are living with the consequences of those days. Is that not so?

15. And the Government can claim that it was not to blame because it left the rendering industry to regulate itself?

16. (And, besides, the Scott report said the Government has always acted in good faith, did it not?)

17. And the farmers were not to blame because they accepted the feed in good faith from the rendering industry and didn't know what was in it?

18. Therefore, it must have been the feed industry which was to blame?

19. So can we expect a lot of law-suits being taken out against the feed industry by farmers driven to the verge of bankruptcy?

20. When you last picked up a jar of Bovril, did you wonder if there was such a thing as mad beef drink disease?

comment

Why the state can't fix the family

Pushing single mothers into having their babies adopted is no solution to unplanned pregnancy

The Government wants to encourage more single mothers to give their babies up for adoption. What a good idea!

Some 38,000 teenage girls and 50,000 non-cohabiting single women give birth every year at a cost to the state of £9bn in social security. Most single mothers are destined to live in the worst flats in the worst estates, without child care or a chance to work, their children's chances blighted from the start. (It is odd how the Government focuses on the inadequacies of single mothers when fathers are the ones who cause most of the trouble in problem families. When pressed on this point, they hasten to say that they mean any unplanned child with less than ideal parents.)

Meanwhile, thousands of childless couples queue in vain to adopt. Simple. Call in the social engineers, and it shouldn't take much spanner-work to solve these two problems with one short, sharp wrench.

Tomorrow, the Department of Health publishes a draft Bill on adoption, together with a consultation document. Its officials could not frame a legal clause that would persuade unmarried mothers to give away their babies - in the old days it was done by sbams and family threats. So instead, a circular has just been issued to local authorities and adoption agencies by the department, an authoritative missive just short of legislation.

The circular instructs social workers to promote adoption as a positively good solution instead of a last resort. "Adoption continues to be an important service for children, offering a

positive and beneficial outcome for many. ... For many children it will be clear to social workers at an early stage that adoption is the only practical long-term solution likely to meet their particular needs."

Leaving aside low thoughts about the public exchequer, what ideas lie behind this eulogy for adoption? John Bowis, the Health minister, explains: "We are trying to promote adoption as an acceptable and valid alternative to abortion and the burden of bringing up an unwanted child."

The idea was first widely mooted in the United States by Newt Gingrich and stolen, like so many, by John Redwood. Now, watered down, it has trickled into this new adoption legislation.

How odd that the right's infatuation with genetic determinism (the poor are poor because they are genetically inferior), exemplified in the recent influential book *The Bell Curve*, allows them to admit that changing a child's environment will change its destiny - a liberal creed it ever there was one.

Encouraging adoption sits strangely in the right-wing canon since it involves state intervention in the most private of matters. The right, often correctly, thinks that the state is very bad at many things, such as running gas and electric industries or managing housing estates. When it comes to taking responsibility for vulnerable children, it has scarcely improved since the days of Oliver Twist. Of the 51,000 children in its "care", 75 per cent will leave with no qualifications, one in seven girls will leave care pregnant or already with a baby, while 26 per cent of the prison population are care graduates. Hardly

a record to suggest that the state should intervene in a whole lot more families in order to do them similar good.

Of course, adoption is not the same: newborn babies nestled into carefully selected families do not suffer that fate. Some 21 per cent of adoptions do fail but mainly among children adopted at older ages. However, many more adopted children do develop behavioural problems, earning them disproportionate referrals to child guidance clinics. As adults, half of all adopted women and 30 per cent of men set off in search of their natural mothers, feeling that some part of themselves is missing.

In a book called *Lost Children*, I interviewed a great many adopted people who described a deep sense of dislocation. They spoke of looking in the mirror and wondering if anyone

else anywhere looked like them. They lived with a dangerous dream of a lost, better family and a perfect mother.

As for the wretched mothers forced by poverty and disgrace to part with their babies, the anguish lasts forever. They talk of gazing at everyone in the street of the right age, trying to recognise the child they abandoned.

Those are the very good reasons why the Government is wrong to promote adoption except in *extremis*. Yet a nagging doubt remains: When you see hopeless cycles of deprivation repeating themselves over and over again, why not take that child gently from the arms of inadequate parents, married or not, and rescue it from following in their footsteps? Even if that adopted child does grow up full of regrets, isn't that outweighed by the undoubtedly benefits? The child is automatically moved up the social ladder, brought up in a well-heeled family, to be well educated with every prospect of a good life ahead, so isn't that better?

Against that view is history. Such social engineering has led to untold misery, though it often looked like common sense at the time. Dr Barnardo's and the Government sent battalions of poor children abroad as "apprentices" to a "better life" in Canada and Australia, where they ended up as indentured servants. The mass evacuation of very young children in the war, without their mothers, "for their own good" is now regarded as a brutal error. Governments get these things wrong.

The Children Act planned in the law the idea that a child's interests are always paramount. But it turns out to be an ideal impossible to grasp, let

alone implement. Looking at most court decisions, it is apparent that we still regard children as the possessions of their biological parents. We do not know how else to treat parents' loud claims of ownership. This month, the Court of Appeal sent a 10-year-old Zulu boy who had lived in Maida Vale for four years back to his natural parents - to live in unaccustomed poverty, with no chance of an education - despite his passionate wish to stay in London with the only family he has ever known. His parents' demands for his return overruled all his own wishes, and it happened time and again in courts everywhere.

In the end, the argument against the Government's desire to take more children from their parents is not the emotional or Freudian one that says a baby is always better off at the breast of its biological mother. That is often self-evidently sentimental nonsense, since a great many parents are monstrous.

No, the reason why state-promoted adoption makes no sense is this. There are limits to what government can and should attempt to do. To step in and seize babies from undesirable, though not dangerous parents is beyond the remit of government, and suggests that the state is responsible for ensuring that every child gets equal and optimal parenting.

Should government take the blame for every human failing, even for fate itself? Where would this quasi-eugenic thinking ever end? How oddly it sits in the spectrum of modern right-wing individualist ideas, when it so plainly belongs to the realms of socialism or even national socialism.

Could he be the auntie-pope?

Andrew Brown reviews the Archbishop of Canterbury's five turbulent years in office

tomorrow is the fifth anniversary of the confirmation of Dr George Carey as Archbishop of Canterbury. This is an almost meaningless formality which comes between the moment when the new Archbishop is actually chosen by the Prime Minister and his ceremonial enthronement weeks later. Still, Dr Carey thought it significant enough to use as a peg for a sermon this weekend: a proper regard for the dignities of this office is one of his most notable characteristics.

Providentially, Dr Carey has the energy to make millions of mistakes and recover. He writes his own speeches, works very long hours and still keeps time for a programme of earnest d

He has the energy to make millions of mistakes and recover

ver of committees, and adept and determined at getting things done.

Perhaps the secret both of his

success and of his limitations is found in a phrase used in the preface to the report of the Turnbull Commission, which is his blueprint for reforming the central structures of the Church of England. There he is called the "vicar to the nation", a title that seems to have been invented for the occasion. It fits. His model of authority is that of the admired vicar of a growing congregation, as he once was in Durham. He still treats the wider church as if it were his congregation. His sermons and lectures are meant to provide a programme of teaching. He expects quite normal people to accord him authority, because he is Archbishop.

This may provoke patronising shudders among Catholics and secular intellectuals. It may also be just what is needed: as he leads the Church into still more difficult times. For if disestablishment comes, he has been there already. Dr Carey is the first Archbishop of Canterbury for centuries who not only was born outside the Establishment (on a council estate in Barking), but has never really been inside it. He has a deep understanding of the qualities that churches need to succeed in a hostile marketplace. If these turn out to be inimical to, or even incompatible with, the qualities that once made the Church of England loved, well, that is not his problem, or his fault.

It is a misconception that Brussels can simply dole out money to farmers in trouble

tip unwanted food if it falls below a certain price - will come into play. But intervention in beef is now much more limited than it used to be (partly, and quite rightly so, at British insistence). Standard EU subsidies will not save the beef industry from ruin and certainly will not restore its good name.

Some great propitiatory bonfire of older British cattle - however unsatisfactory - now seems to be demanded as the price of rebuilding consumer confidence. The Cabinet is balking at such a step because of the great cost involved (£1bn at the very minimum). This may, in turn, be because Brussels is reluctant to pay part of the bill.

Why? There is plenty of money sloshing around in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget.

It is a misconception that Brussels can simply dole out money to farmers in trouble

isn't there? No, and also yes. It is a misconception that Brussels can simply dole out money to farmers in trouble. There has to be an agreed policy; there have to be available funds. The total amount available for animal disease eradication throughout Europe this year is £53m. The entire £31m CAP budget for 1996 is under some pressure.

It does transpire, however, that Brussels expects CAP reforms and high world food prices to produce an enormous potential surplus - maybe £2bn - in the farm budget over the next three years. Arguments are already raging about the ownership of this cash. Brussels wants to spend some of it on large transport projects; Britain wants to give it back to the taxpayers (ie, to put the UK share towards its own tax cut and re-election fund).

Europe - not just Britain - faces an agricultural crisis. A special programme should be drawn up to help farmers to get rid of all European cattle over a certain age that could possibly have been exposed to BSE. Brussels should use the creative accountancy for which it is famous to borrow the needed funds from the CAP surpluses expected in future years.

Yes, Britain and British farmers would benefit most. But we have paid faithfully into the CAP for 23 years, mostly for the benefit of Continental and Irish farmers. Instead of exchanging insults in Turin, the European Commission, Britain and its EU partners should seize this opportunity by the horns.

It. Will the guests be more likely to choose that product above others in future? Will they buy the author's book? As the screenwriter William Goldman once observed about the film business, "Nobody knows."

If Carol had wanted to guarantee sponsorship for her party, she should have approached a less familiar brand of gin. As it is, she and Sir Denis have been lucky that United Distillers felt embarrassed by the leaking of an insulating memorandum. But the whole episode has served to achieve that quintessential goal for any sponsor or author: to raise one's profile.

As I've contributed to the process too, in my own humble way, I'm looking forward to receiving my invitation to the bash from Harper-Collins' publicity department. Mine's a large one.



Emergency measure: a customs official at Boulogne inspects British livestock

We have a right not just to be quarantined but to be helped towards recovery

The real issues of Europe and BSE lie elsewhere. There are at least three. First, Mr Fischler had no right to impose the ban, using his own authority or even that of the 14 senior vets from other member states who met in Brussels on Monday. The decision should properly have gone to today's meeting of the full Commission.

The second issue is whether there is sufficient medical evidence for such a ban. The whole scientific argument has become so obfuscated that it is impossible for a layman - or even a specialist - to give a sensible answer. Brussels was reacting not scientifically but politically. Most of the big beef-importing countries, such as the United States, banned our beef long ago. All EU countries save two have unilaterally followed suit in recent days. The worldwide ban - if confirmed - is to distinguish between British and non-British beef. Its real aim is to shore up confidence in the global beef exports of other EU countries.

The third issue - and the most important - is what else Brussels plans to do. Agriculture, rightly or wrongly, is another policy area largely surrendered by member states to Brussels. There is a serious, potentially crippling, sickness in Europe's agricultural family. Even if the sickness is partly of our own making, we have a right, as members of the family, not just to be quarantined but to be helped towards recovery.

As things stand, the BSE row looks likely to spoil the launch in Turin on

Friday of the rolling Inter-Governmental Conference on the future shape of the EU. The Turin summit was hardly shaping up to be a conspicuous success. One row, it seems, will blend seamlessly into the other. But such an outcome is not inevitable.

In all honesty, the EU has more right to be angry with the British government than does London with the EU. For six years or more, the European Commission and the other member states have fought a rearguard action to keep the Continental market open for British beef. All other leading importers - including our American and Australian friends and cousins - banned our meat at the slightest suspicion of a problem. The commission swallowed, and defended, the British line (a) BSE was not transmissible to humans and (b) everything possible had been done to prevent meat sold for human consumption from being exposed to all weeks.

This is human nature. But Europe - if it is serious about persuading Britain to join the club in spirit as well as in form - is in danger of being out of its dining room for the

little was done by the deregulation-obsessed Thatcher government in the late 1980s to fence off the infection from the human food chain.

It may be true, as British farmers say, that there is also a BSE problem lurking on the Continent. But many of the proven cases - including those found in Brittany this week - are traceable to British sources, largely because Brussels fought to protect the cross-Channel trade in live animals. Mr Fischler also complains that even when the new scientific evidence began to emerge, Whitehall kept Brussels in the dark.

There is undoubtedly some Euro *schadenfreude* here. Britain loves to lecture its partners on its scrupulous observation of the European rules and the superiority of our national standards to some Continental standards (take a bow, Michael Portillo). There is an element of grim delight in finding such a stick to beat Britain with - in the Turin summit week of all weeks.

This is human nature. But Europe - if it is serious about persuading Britain to join the club in spirit as well as in form - is in danger of being out of its dining room for the

important trick. BSE is shaping up as the greatest British political crisis for many years: a crisis of confidence in the whole apparatus of government. This should be an opportunity to suggest to the British people that membership of a European union provides comfort and solidarity, not just free trade and red passports.

The EU could help by subjecting the British government's latest scientific analysis and safeguards (ie, the claim that British beef is now safe) to a rigorous independent investigation, the results of which should be made public. That, in essence, is what Mr Fischler proposes. If he is then able to recommend a lifting of the embargo, he might have done more to restore international and domestic confidence in British beef than a simple, unquestioning acceptance of the word of THIS government.

But we should expect more from Brussels. At some point, if UK beef prices continue to fall, our farmers will be eligible automatically for EU aid. What remains of the notorious intervention system - the guarantee to the horns.

The benefits a drinks company will derive from sponsoring a publisher's launch are intangible. Equally intangible is what kind of benefit the author and publisher will derive from

Hospitality on the rocks

Carol Thatcher wants free drink. Christopher Silvester sympathises

valued. Sponsorship of Carol's and Sir Denis's party is hardly likely to jeopardise the company's image. But why should authors be forced to suffer the humiliation of having to seek sponsorship for their launches?

Once upon a time, publishers were generous party hosts. A party to launch a book was the expectation of every non-fiction author, an engine of promotion that would generate a buzz. Now we have publishing conglomerates, dump-hhins, discounting palates. We found a hotel that was willing to give over its dining room for the

evening at cost price and persuaded a camera company to act as the underwriting sponsor (paying for the hotel's staff costs and loss of dining trade). Then I found a large drinks company to provide an array of underexposed brands - a vodka, a malt whisky, a red wine, a range of soft-drink mixers. The final element in the line-up was an energetic new cheese supplier.

The benefits a drinks company will derive from sponsoring a publisher's launch are intangible. Equally intangible is what kind of benefit the author and publisher will derive from

We have chosen our way of life. Surely we can choose our way of death?

79% of people in this country believe that it should be legal for those incurably ill and in severe distress to be allowed to request a peaceful, dignified end to their suffering. Our law does not agree: so the agony continues.

If you support voluntary euthanasia, the best way to achieve a change in the law is to join the Voluntary Euthanasia Society. Do it today.

Join the Voluntary Euthanasia Society and you will receive a free Advance Directive, which enables you to specify your wishes not to be subjected to unwanted medical intervention if incurably ill.

Please make me a member of VES and keep me informed about the campaign. I enclose £11 annual subscription (Joint membership £15).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Voluntary Euthanasia Society

For Dignity in Dying

VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA SOCIETY, 13 PRINCE OF WALES TERRACE, LONDON NW1 5PG. TELEPHONE: 0171-937 7770.

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bless figures
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grand scale



COMMENT

'As a long-term strategy, selling a sizeable chunk of the group's £2bn property portfolio to pay the dividend is hardly credible even if, in the short term, it avoids the ignominy of cutting the payout.'

It is a measure of the success of the charm offensive launched yesterday by Lord Sterling that investors studiously ignored the apparent lack of substance in his proposals to restore P&O's fortunes. They focused instead on the fact that the company's saving grace, one of the FTSE 100's highest dividend yields at 7.5 per cent, looks about as foreseen as the future and the shares nudged duly higher.

It is hard to escape the view, however, that it will take more than yesterday's promises to persuade the City to rerate the shares. As a long-term strategy, selling a sizeable chunk of the group's £2bn property portfolio to pay the dividend is hardly credible even if, in the short term, it avoids the ignominy of cutting the payout.

Floating off Bovis Homes, while it gets rid of one of the most cash-hungry parts of the empire and conveniently sidelines a division with one of the lowest returns in the group, is also hardly a great strategic leap forward. Arguably in the run up to a widely expected housing recovery, P&O should be holding on to Bovis.

The group's problem is not that its spread of transport, shipping and property businesses are unusually badly run but that they operate in a range of lousy markets. During the 1980s Lord Sterling was baited out by inflation, as he had been during the 1970s, with relentlessly rising property values providing the cash to invest heavily in the capital intensive cruise liner and ferries busi-

nesses. It is possible to argue that continuing to invest throughout the recession was the right long term strategy, misunderstood by the short-sighted City, but with the real estate cash tap firmly shut it was never going to be a sustainable policy.

One of Lord Sterling's favourite charts at the moment shows how since he took the helm in 1983 the total return on P&O's shares broadly matched that of the market until little more than a year ago. That says something about the importance of dividend income to total investment performance, and rather more about the ability of statistics to tell any story you want them to.

As the chart on the opposite page shows, another way of looking at the same data is that P&O's shares, having outperformed the market by a huge amount in Lord Sterling's first two honeymoon years in charge, have steadily underperformed ever since. Yesterday's proposals will hold the snipers off for a while but, with a plausible break-up value in excess of £7 a share, it will take something more substantive than this to see off P&O's critics for good.

Labour will not stop Railtrack flotation

Most stock market pundits are a spineless lot. Even those prepared to forecast the index tend to avoid putting a date on it. The Labour Party may be about to try

the political equivalent, by leaving the date out of its promise to bring the railways back into public ownership. Within the next few days the party is planning to release a policy statement to be incorporated in the Railtrack prospectus next month.

The indications are that the wording will be tough, satisfying John Prescott, the hawks' deputy leader, but leaving the timing so vague that Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, will be able to dismiss the financial crisis, thus reassuring the City about Labour's fiscal orthodoxy.

Labour will repeat its previous statement that Britain needs a publicly owned, publicly accountable railway, implying it will bring Railtrack back under public control, at some undefined date. It is also likely to propose abolition of the £2bn a year government subsidy to the 25 passenger train operating companies and a re-routing of the money directly to Railtrack.

This is obviously going to be difficult, given the tight contracts under which train operating franchises have been sold. However, it might be possible. If track access charges are reduced by the amount the operating companies receive in subsidies, the financial effect would be neutral. But why bother? While subsidising Railtrack rather than the operating companies might give the Government more control over the network, it is hard to see what other benefits there would be. Labour policy will probably be dressed up with lots of cautious words about consulta-

tion and deciding at the appropriate time. It may knock a little off the sale price, but it will not stop the flotation.

These unemployment figures are a sham

To describe the unemployment statistics as a "fiddle on an orchestral scale", as Greiville Janier, chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee did yesterday, is certainly a good line. His report on the same was, however, a rather more limp affair than the one produced by civil servants.

The committee held back from calling decisively for a monthly unemployment number based on the Labour Force Survey. The Central Statistical Office made its own view rather clearer with a working paper recommending collecting the figures on this internationally accepted definition at an extra cost of £7.5m a year.

The Chancellor has now been told by three separate bodies that the headline figure, which measures the number of benefit claimants, is widely regarded as a sham, since it understates – probably quite substantially – those actually unemployed and seeking work. It is an easy figure for the Government to collect but it has been undermined by the many changes in definition.

The new Job Seekers' Allowance in April will be the latest in a long line of changes

affecting the headline total. Independent experts, official statisticians and MPs are in agreement that it will no longer do.

The lavish rewards of failure

When it comes to lavishly rewarding failure, the Dutch masters of Barings have managed to suppress their deep Calvinist austerity. By any measure, the financial package agreed with Andrew "Teflon" Tuckey is an affront.

It may be paltry compared with the rich rewards that he once believed were rightfully his. But this is the man who presided, as deputy chairman, over one of the most spectacular collapses the City has known. The Securities and Futures Authority, holding to strict legal procedures, cleared Tuckey of direct involvement in the management debâcle that allowed the Barings disaster to happen. But there was no hiding their feeling that natural justice had not been seen to do.

Now this "Retirement" at 52 with a pension of £120,000 a year; a £10,000 annual fee as a consultant, and the usual share of profits as bonus. Such are the rewards of failure. Ministers don't resign these days, so why should investment banking captains go down with their ship? But rest assured, ING Barings says his role has been substantially scaled down. Oh well, that's all right then.

IN BRIEF

• The trend of rapidly rising directors' pay continued yesterday with a 7.8 per cent increase for Stephen Maran, chief executive of Lloyds Abbey Life. He received £372,000, including a £124,000 performance bonus, compared with total earnings of £209,000 in 1994. This excludes pension contributions, which also rose from £81,000 to £98,000.

• Consumer confidence in the US declined a fraction in March, according to the monthly survey by the Conference Board. The index fell to 97.7 from 98 in February. Consumers remained apprehensive about jobs, despite the creation of 705,000 new jobs in February. The Conference Board said consumer attitudes were in "neutral territory".

• Richard Branson's Virgin Group has confirmed that it is considering a return to the music business just four years after selling its original label to Thorn EMI. A spokesman said Mr Branson had "spoken to a number of people in the industry" and decided to look more closely at it. A decision will be taken over the next six months. Virgin has already recruited Jeremy Pearce, managing director of Sony's European music licensing division. When Virgin sold its label to Thorn it signed a 35-month no-competition clause, which has now lapsed.

• Charter, the railway ties to welding products group, is ready to spend between £100m and £500m to add a new leg to the business. Jeffrey Herbert, chief executive, said it had looked at around 20 businesses over the past 12 months, two or three seriously, but none had met its criteria. Any new business must be industrial, have an international presence and lead the market in its sector. Charter said: "A corporate orphan, unwanted and unwanted... lurking at the bottom of a massive Euro-conglomerate" would be ideal. Charter reported all its businesses were on target in the first two months of the year, as it announced that the acquisition of Essab in 1994 had sent profits soaring to £97.5m last year.

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• Inceape's insurance broker, Bain Hogg, is in negotiations with its 40 per cent-owned associate, Cesar of France, with a view to merging the two companies' non-domestic European business interests. The merged operations are likely to be run as a 50:50 joint venture, adding that the new company's first start-up operation could possible be in Germany, where neither has a presence.



Hamleys, owner of the famous London toy shop, has shrugged aside terrorist attacks in the capital and is seeing sales run ahead of last year. But chairman Howard Dyer warned that the impact of the return of terrorism was difficult to predict as he unveiled a 13 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £6.38m for the year to January. Sales rose 10 per cent in the Regent Street store, while concessions in House of Fraser stores were up 38 per cent. A final dividend of 5.4p raises the total 16 per cent to 8.1p.

Halifax sees future in savings

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Britain's largest building society, Halifax, said its future lies in savings rather than mortgages, as it yesterday reported a 13 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £1.1bn.

Pointing to Monday's £800m purchase of Clerical Medical, the life insurance mutual, as a key pointer to Halifax's strategic development, Jon Foulds, chairman, said: "The ageing population, the diminishing welfare state, the disillusionment with housing and the switch from physical to financial assets mean that savings is above all where our future lies."

There is a view in the City that up to half the shares available to institutional investors could go to those in the US. The UK is expected to get the lion's share of the balance.

The exact pricing and details of the allocations are due to be announced this morning, with dealings in the shares starting at 2.30pm. Some City analysts expect the price to jump to around £2.50 on opening.

He said Halifax, which is to convert to a bank next year, will concentrate on using its franchise in the mortgage market to build up personal savings. "This will be the fastest growing side of the business". At present, like all building societies, mortgage-related business accounts for around 95 per cent of Halifax's earnings.

The 1995 results were earned against a housing market characterised by weak demand and intense competition among lenders. Although Halifax maintained its position as Britain's largest lender with 19 per cent of net new business, this appeared to be slightly below its usual share.

Mr Foulds was sceptical about the usefulness of further interest rate cuts for the housing market. "Mortgages are already at historically such low levels that I don't think another

fall in base rates will help much. At best it would have a marginal effect."

Halifax, which merged with Leeds Building Society in August last year, said its members will vote on conversion in early 1997, probably February. If approved, flotation will be by the summer.

Mr Foulds said this lengthy process ensured that as many qualifying members as possible would have been with the society for over two years to benefit most from the free shares distribution. There would be some 9 million shareholders.

Halifax said it was taking a £1.5bn charge for costs associated with the Leeds merger.

Electricity firms row over costs

The electricity industry is heading for another row over the introduction of domestic competition in 1998, and about who will pay the cost of the computers and other systems needed to allow orderly trading to take place, writes Mary Fagan.

The regional electricity companies believe the total bill could be £200m to £300m instead of £200m suggested by the regulator, Ofgas, and are concerned that shareholders should not bear the brunt of the costs.

East Midlands Electricity has complained to Ofgas, calling for clarification of the situation and how the costs will be recouped. It is thought that the regional companies agreed at a meeting on Monday to pay £50m, clawing it back from customers only once the benefits of competition have been established. However, East Midlands argues that the sum will cover only the costs of changes in the electricity trading pool and fails to recognise the impact on the individual companies.

The company pointed out yesterday that Ofgas, the gas watchdog, put the cost of introducing competition in gas at £180m and that this is a much simpler task.

A senior executive of one company also warned that there could be chaos in 1998 unless Professor Stephen Littlechild, director general of Ofgas, assumes direct responsibility for driving the project. "In gas the Government and the regulator took the reins in electricity no one owns the project – no one

Vodafone sales hit as Orange heads for market debut

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Vodafone's level of net new subscribers has slumped to about 100,000 in the first quarter of the year from 180,000 in the same period in 1995. Numbers at Cellnet are also thought to have suffered as both companies feel the increasing competition from Orange, whose shares began trading on the stock market today at an expected top of the range price of 205p.

Vodafone has yet to publish figures for the quarter, but industry sources believe the market leader took up about 30,000

net new customers in both January and February and is expecting around 45,000 for March. There is a view that the March pick-up is partly due to Vodafone's new range of consumer-oriented tariffs, which follow Orange's lead in offering a certain number of "free" call minutes for a given monthly charge. The company is also planning a major advertising and marketing campaign to fend off the threat from Orange and the other relative newcomer, One-2-One.

According to one City analyst, "One Orange bad built their

'free' call offers lead to tangle of charges

Consumer groups have been increasingly concerned about the plethora of complex charging packages available from different mobile operators and the difficulty experienced by many customers in making the right choice for their needs, writes Mary Fagan.

The issue has been highlighted by the decision by Orange to complain to the Advertising Standards Authority over advertisements by Cellnet which the small operator regards as misleading.

Orange pioneered the concept of "free" minutes bundled with a given monthly charge but Cellnet and Vodafone are now taking a similar approach with digital consumer packages. Orange's new packages for digital consumers start with a monthly fee of £27.50 including 50 minutes of "free" calls. There are two existing shareholders, Hutchison Whampoa of Hong Kong and British Aerospace, will own 50.49 per cent and 22.92 per cent following the sale.

Institutional investors have

subscribed for more than nine times the number of shares available and 30,000 small investors have applied for shares. There is likely to be some scaling back in allocations to private investors although this may be limited as Orange is thought to be keen to have customers also owning shares.

There is a view in the City that up to half the shares available to institutional investors could go to those in the US. The UK is expected to get the lion's share of the balance.

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Taylor Woodrow swims against construction tide

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

Many construction companies boast about the strength of their international operations offsetting weakness at home. Taylor Woodrow is unusual, however, in generating more from work outside the UK than inside. In the last year its geographical spread paid off handsomely.

In the 12 months to December profits actually fell, from £50.8m to £46m, largely thanks to 1994's one-off profit from the sale of Eurotunnels units and an exceptional hit this time, which we already knew about, to cover the cost of restructuring the UK construction arm. At the underlying operating level, however, returns were 17 per cent higher as all areas except home-grown contracting improved.

Running against the prevailing tide in the industry, Taylor Woodrow has stuck by its federation of businesses, a grouping of activities which at first sight seems to make little sense. Why, for example, should the company continue to run a trading operation, peddling among other things janitorial supplies and video equipment, when its real expertise lies in property development, housebuilding and private finance construction work?

No one will complain, however, about the 32 per cent jump in profits from the Greenwich trading arm from £4.7m to £6.2m. Sales were up

a healthy 16 per cent as organic expansion continued and the return on net assets employed of only £28.5m would be the envy of many.

It is a better performance than construction, which despite substantial increases in overseas activity only managed to break even before the one-off costs of redundancies announced at the half-way stage. Taylor Woodrow has real expertise in private finance work around the world, but it is little better than its peers at converting that into profits.

In housing, however, the wide spread of activities in Canada, California, Florida and Australia was a

real boon in the context of a still-stagnant market at home. An increase in housing profits from £21m to £23.4m was an impressive performance.

Taylor's shares have been among

the sector's best performers so far this year, bouncing from a low of 100p last November to yesterday's 149p, an 8 per cent rise on the day as analysts pushed their forecasts between 10 and 15 per cent higher to

£60m. On that basis, the shares stand on a prospective price/earnings ratio of about 15. After a good run, the shares are about right.

done everything they said they would. Rigorous management has helped lift like-for-like profits at Esab by 22 per cent and underlying margins have grown 2 percentage points, when the windfall benefits from a bonanza in Brazilian sales of welding rods at the end of 1994 are stripped out.

Meanwhile, Charter's remaining businesses, mainly the separately-quoted Cape building insulation group and Pandrol railtrack fastenings, have not been neglected. Cape has done well to shrug off the UK's building malaise to raise profits 29 per cent, while a \$5m (£3.3m) turnaround into the black at the US track maintenance operation helped push up returns from the rail equipment division by 56 per cent.

But the big question for Mr Herbert and his team is how to maintain the momentum. Last year, economic growth meant volumes rose between 8 and 15 per cent in Esab's businesses, pushing margins through the 10 per cent target. The harder task will be to hold that level through the cycle, as hoped. Further cost cutting, shifting more production to low cost areas and a push into the Far East

will help, but the test will be the next recession, admittedly some way off.

A bigger hurdle for Mr Herbert will be to repeat Esab. With gearing cut to an impressive 17 per cent from 91 per cent in 1994, he is likely to spend anywhere between £100m and £150m. Similar targets are being sought among European conglomerates but the market waited for Esab and Mr Herbert is not about to be rushed.

In the meantime, profits of £108m this year would put the shares, up 14p to 893p, on a forward p/e of 12. Undervalued.

doesn't believe there is any real upside here. The shares trade on a heavily discounted price/earnings ratio of 10 but there is still no interest. If the share price does drift up from its current 155p to around 170p they are likely to be hit by heavy selling.

All this is hard on the management, which is doing all the right things but running to stand still.

The dismal 3.5 per cent fall in like-for-like sales in the first nine weeks of the second half has been reversed and comparative sales have risen by 2 per cent in the 17 weeks since January. Margins have also improved.

Iceland is also refining back its store opening programme and will now open 40 new stores during the year. This compares with a recent annual average of 50.

Last year's results were decent in a difficult market. Pre-tax profits in the year to December were 3.4 per cent higher at £72.6m. Sales were flat at £1.4bn.

With £34m net cash, a share buy back is possible but this is unlikely to excite the market. Analysts have trimmed their profit forecasts for the current year to around 76m.

With sluggish earnings growth prospects and price competition in the supermarket sector set to put more pressure on margins, the shares have few attractions.

Iceland needs new direction

It is becoming increasingly clear that Iceland, the frozen food retailer, is in need of a new direction. Its role as a "top up" shop in the cut-throat supermarket sector just isn't providing the returns.

Hence last year's failed bid to buy the Littlewoods stores, which indicated a lack of confidence in the existing business.

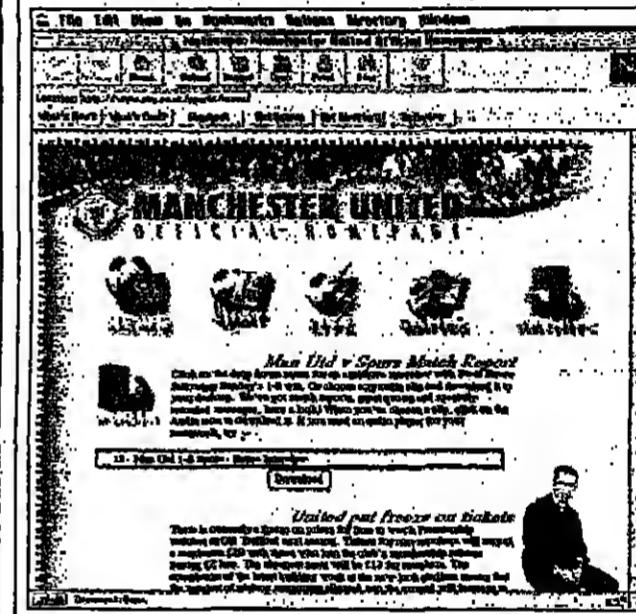
Chief executive Malcolm Walker confirmed those suspicions yesterday when he hinted that although no acquisitions are on the horizon he would still like to do a deal.

The problem is that the market

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

United's anoraks find the back of the Internet



And Cantona finds cyberspace up the middle: What a site – Manchester United's screen image

Manchester United has the 17th most popular web site on the whole of the Internet. Success on the pitch and in the City has now been followed by success in cyberspace. Announcing half-year results yesterday United said that since launching its own site on the World Wide Web last December (ask an anorak what this bit means) it has had more than a million visits.

Apparently the site itself is vast, with loads of detail about players, plans for the club and so on. It also has a "Chat Forum" for fans to communicate through, which has clocked up more than 7,000 messages. One company, Internet Direct, is so impressed that United has been nominated for its "Yell Awards" for "Best site on the Internet." Talk about planting the ball in the back of the net. If you're a fan and have nothing better to do with your life, here's the address: <http://www.sky.co.uk/sports/manu>

Peter Hyde, the head of UK research at Kleinwort Benson, has been poached by BZW to head its transport team. Mr Hyde was the top-ranked analyst in the Exel survey in 1993 over all sectors, and also won accolades as an analyst in the water sector from 1989 to 1995. BZW trilled yesterday. "We're delighted. It's a feather in our cap."

Since Mr Hyde will be swapping the central location of Kleinwort's Fenchurch Street offices for BZW's new ones miles away in Canary Wharf, Mr Hyde must have

been paid an even heftier transfer fee than usual.

Sir Nicholas Goodison, the former chairman of TSB and now deputy chairman of the Lloyds TSB Group, is not happy about the future of the modern art collection built up by the TSB before it was gobbed up by the black horse.

Sir Nicholas fully accepts that the pictures and sculpture from more than 40 young

British artists must move from the TSB's old head office at 60 Lombard Street, which will close once the merger is completed. But he is determined not to move the collection just along the road to 71 Lombard Street, Lloyds Bank's head office – because of the ghastly yellow limo-like floor covering which predominates on the fourth floor, where the top executives hang out.

There's no way of getting rid of the yellow stuff either. It's got a preservation order on it, something about "art doc."

Greg Dyke, chief executive of Pearson Television, was at a dinner party given by Barry Cox, president of the FTV Association, a number of years ago. Mr Dyke was talking to a young man who had just been elected as a Labour MP and asked him why he had wanted to go into Parliament. "To make a difference," was the gist of the man's reply. Mr Dyke then declared: "The Labour Party needs people like you it needs a ***ing hole in the head."

The young man, of course, was Tony Blair.

COMPANY RESULTS			
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS
Barr & Wallace (F)	259m (261m)	4.6m (5.8m)	20.8p (22.3p)
Cansic (F)	408m (450m)	24.1m (18.2m)	5.47p (4.34p)
Charter (H)	1.13m (527m)	97.5m (54.8m)	67.5p (38.4p)
Hansols (F)	30.1m (25.2m)	8.4m (5.85m)	19.3p (21.2p)
Iceland Group (F)	1.37m (1.32m)	72.6m (70.2m)	77.1p (67.7p)
Lloyd Thompson (F)	23.1m (21.3m)	10.4m (8.1m)	4.21p (3.61p)
Manchester United (F)	29.9m (35.4m)	15.2m (7.3m)	5.16p (1.46p)
Meghitt (F)	358m (345m)	21.3m (14.8m)	13.46p (8.35p)
P&O (F)	6.57m (5.95m)	320m (350m)	37.8p (35.1p)
Taylor Woodrow (F)	1.13m (1.14m)	46.0m (50.8m)	7.25p (7.68p)
Unicomm (F)	1.40m (1.32m)	45.4m (44.0m)	15.42p (13.56p)
Whitewater Park (F)	75.0m (75.0m)	8.12m (7.55m)	85.8p (82.4p)
(F) - Final (H) - Interim (M) - Nine months			

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RACING: The richest race ever can advertise the ability of 'the world champion' and the delights of Dubai as a sporting centre

Cigar to blaze a trail for Sheikh's playground

RICHARD EDMONDSON
reports from Dubai

Much has been made this week of how much Sheikh Mohammed has spent promoting the Dubai World Cup, which today becomes the richest horse race run on the planet.

The natural consequence of this largesse to the open-mouthed seems to be that the Sheikh is throwing away his money. The Sheikh, however, cannot be judged in normal terms. This is a man who has invested \$1.3m on a single (useless) horse by the name of Snaaf Dancer, a man who has purchased studs around the globe to house the best of his legions of horses. He also understands the power of publicity.

Down through the family lines the Maktoums have long placed emphasis on providing for succeeding generations. Today's race is another event to promote the value of the country to business and holidaymakers around the globe, and if the objective is reached and the plane loads arrive, the amounts spent in fueling today's visitors will seem piffling.

Certainly the Sheikh himself is not troubled by the thought,

of entertaining his guests in the Emirates. "The more of you that come here the better it is for us," he told the press corps on their arrival.

The Sheikh says he does not care who wins the Dubai World Cup, but he must have a view and it may not be that one of his own horses takes the largest chunk of the \$4m prize.

The best result for him, and the probable one too, in terms of advertisement would be a victory for the American champion, Cigar, who is owned by his sometime business ally Allen Paulson.

Paulson reports that Cigar did not lose a single pound in weight on his 14-hour trip from the United States, but that is as likely as passengers in first class not putting on a pound during the journey. Nevertheless, the horse looks as if he has stepped down from the canvas, his muscles hard and coat varnished.

The six-year-old completed a circuit of the Nad Al Sheba course under a threatening sky yesterday morning in the usual company of his trainer, Bill Mott, and his pony, Snowball. He appears unfurled by running under lights (which he has never tried competitively before) and has taken well to the

deeper sand of Dubai's principal course. Paulson can envisage defeat only if there is a freakish intervention such as the arrival of space debris. "If everything goes as it should, he will win," he said. "But even if he doesn't, I will still think of him as the world champion."

The prospects of the home side keeping the trophy—a two-handed silver cup with images of the East, swirling sands and palm trees—lie largely with Hail and Tamayaz.

The growing suggestion in Dubai this week is that the latter holds the stronger chance. The four-year-old was below top class in Europe last summer, but like many animals transported to the Gulf he has shown relentless improvement over the winter. "Tamayaz has surprised us," Sheikh Mohammed says, "and he is still improving."

Just six months ago, it would have been inconceivable to consider any other horse apart from Hail as Godolphin's best. But then came his disastrous attempt on the Breeders' Cup Classic, in which he did so badly around the turns at Belmont Park that it appeared as if his hooves had been buttered. He has plenty to prove.

There will be no surrendering either from Sheikh Mohammed as he continues to publicise his race and his nation. "The World Cup was a dream, a plan and now it is a reality," he said. "We will continue with this race and make Dubai the sports centre of the Middle East."

The best each-way chance may be another animal who competed in the Classic, America's L'Carriere, who finished two and a half lengths behind Cigar at late October day. He is trained by Bond, James Bond (well Jim to his friends actually), whose horses work in saddle cloths bearing an 007 logo.

One certainty is that L'Carriere will lead for much of the race, consequently avoiding the kickback. This factor is against Geoff Wrigg's Fentire, who has never run on dirt before and will now have to run through a curtain of sand when he makes his customary late surge.

Whatever gets L'Carriere will have to show purposefulness as well as speed. "My horse will be grinding it out there and grinding them all down," Bond said. "And whoever comes to him better be running because he won't give up."

There will be no surrendering either from Sheikh Mohammed as he continues to publicise his race and his nation.

"The World Cup was a dream, a plan and now it is a reality," he said. "We will continue with this race and make Dubai the sports centre of the Middle East."



Matchless: Cigar, the hot favourite for today's \$4m Dubai World Cup

Photograph: Simon Bruty/Allsport

NAD AL SHEBA	
3.00 DUBAI WORLD CUP \$2,500,845 added 1m 2f	
1. 111143 LADY SOUL (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
2. 121424 LYCANDER (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
3. 115152 LARROCH (GB) 6 (GB) 4.8	Mr J. C. Smith
4. 121214 SOUL OF THE MOTHER (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
5. 111102 SOUL OF THE MOTHER (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
6. 111111 SOUL OF THE MOTHER (GB) 6 (GB) 4.8	Mr J. C. Smith
7. 1010-16 DASHIM (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
8. 111111 CASH (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
9. 151422 TORMENTOR (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
10. 361102 NEEDLE GUN (GB) 6 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith
11. 111121 PERINCE (GB) 4 (GB) 5.12	Mr J. C. Smith

11 declared

BETTING: evens Cigar, 4-1 Hail, 9-2 Fentire, 7-4 Tamayaz, 12-1 L'Carriere, 14-1 Darvalla, Soul Of The Mother, 28-1 Larroch, 40-1 Neeskens, 50-1 Lively Mount

CHEPSTOW	
2.00 Potentata	HYPERON
2.35 Edina	4-10 All Clear
3.10 Mariner's Air	4-10 Coome Ho
3.40 Sister Stephane	5-10 Real Ale

GOING: Soi 10-day in play.

■ Letbath, undulating course with run-in of 340yds.

■ Racecourse on A466, Chepstow rail station (Cardiff—Glowstone line) is 1 mile away.

ADMISSION: Club 12-16 (24-24 year-old 50p); Tattersalls 50p; Owners 55p; CAR PARK: Club 53.

WEATHER: 10-12 mph, 10-12% chance of rain.

WIND: 10-12 mph, 10-12% chance of rain.

WET WEATHER: 10-

SPORT

Lloyd in line as Illingworth stands down

Cricket

DAVID LLEWELLYN

Five days of confusion over the future direction of the England cricket team ended at Lord's yesterday with Ray Illingworth standing down as team manager and the game's authorities looking for a new coach for the national side. Illingworth is to continue as chairman of selectors, with David Lloyd of Lancashire the favourite to work alongside him as coach.

Following last week's confusion when Illingworth's only rival for re-election as chairman of selectors, David Graveney, was forced to pull out of the contest under pressure from his employers at the Professional Cricketers' Association, the situation degenerated into farce even before the Test and County Cricket Board's 10-man executive had assembled at Lord's to discuss England's bleak winter.

Illingworth had chosen to pre-empt some of the debate by announcing in a national newspaper that he was standing down as England team manager, while remaining as chairman of selectors.

The TCCB claimed it knew nothing of this decision and only late in the day did it acknowledge Illingworth's new role, and the consequent vacancy it created, by announcing: "The executive committee have decided they will appoint a coach, not manager, for

the duration of this summer only. An announcement will be made in due course."

The TCCB is therefore apparently willing to return to a structure which had previously been considered inappropriate. Illingworth had always maintained that there was room for only one at the top, and to this end Keith Fletcher was ditched as manager to allow Illingworth to take on his two roles.

No names were being mentioned officially last night, although there can only be a handful of candidates: David Lloyd, Phil Neale, John Emburey and, as an outsider, Ian Botham. Of those, Lloyd would appear to be the favourite. He said in a radio interview yesterday: "Everybody, I think, is ambitious. And everybody wants to further themselves, to better themselves. If anybody at international level perhaps says: 'We'd like you to do this', you'd think seriously about it."

Lloyd added: "It's nice to be linked with such an important job but at the moment I am the Lancashire coach only."

Illingworth will continue as chairman of selectors until the end of the 1996 season. Having insisted that he is the dressing room type, the ingredients are there for a clash of wills. It is also unclear what will happen to the specialist coaches, John Edrich and Peter Lever.

The TCCB also announced that the selection panel will comprise Illingworth, two elected se-

Pros and cons: four in the frame to coach England



Ian Botham

Age: 40
Playing career: England, Somerset, Worcestershire, Queensland, Durham, 102 Tests (12 as captain) 5,200 runs at 33.54; 383 wickets at 28.40.

For: Powers of inspiration and motivation. Charisma.

Against: Two-thirds of above

are unproven - the England side he captained was not famous for team spirit. In-

experienced in management.



John Emburey

Age: 43
Current position: Northamptonshire player-coach.
Playing career: England, Middlesex, 64 Tests, 1,723 runs at 22.67; 147 wickets at 38.44.

For: Huge knowledge; forward thinking; respect from current players.

Against: Lack of meaningful management or coaching experience - just one Eng-

land A tour.



David Lloyd

Age: 41
Current position: Lancashire coach, England U-19 coach.
Playing career: England, Lancashire, nine Tests; 552 runs at 22.67; 147 wickets at 38.44.

For: Enthusiasm, motivation. Against: Will what works for the Under-19s translate into the full international arena?

Against: Lack of achievement in the Championship?



Phil Neale

Age: 41
Current position: Warwickshire director of coaching.
Playing career: Worcester- shire, no Tests.

For: Excellent management skills and track record as captain and manager-coach; knowledge; forward thinking.

Against: Lack of international experience.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

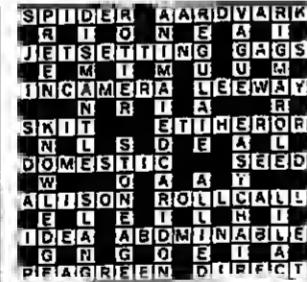
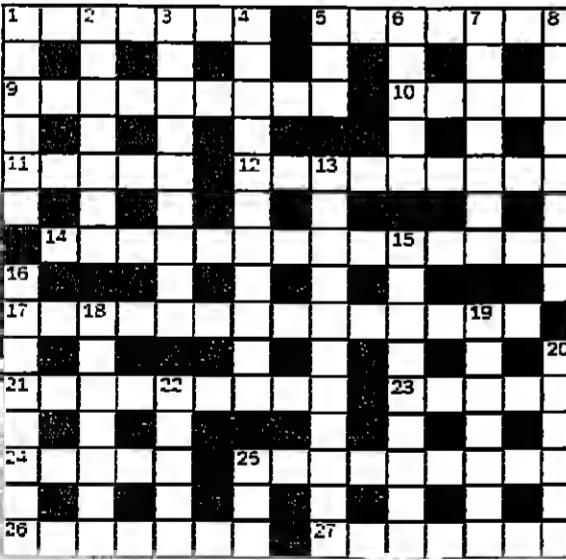
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No. 2945 Wednesday 27 March

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Meat cooked in ovens (7)
5 Cotton fabric beloved of Pygmalion (7)
9 Rascals and wits going to opera-house (9)
10 One leaving row of traffic? (5)
11 Publicity given to cricket-side, broadcasting (2,3)
12 Seamen to trim palms (9)
14 Light a firework (9,5)
17 End tennis-match in disarray and disappointment (14)
21 Toper given unlimited choice in local, it turns out (9)

23 Bottle never broken (5)
24 Descendant rebuked for holding lire (5)
25 Standard names for high pointers to north? (4,5)
26 Piece, of ten gems, in new setting (7)
27 For example, a low cart returns with lengths of material (7)
DOWN
1 Ghost of an idea (6)
2 A river once more backs up and falls (7)
3 Hunting mainly around university for marine animal (3-6)

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RACING'S RICHEST PRIZE

Richard Edmondson in Dubai 25



BRONCOS' BOLD SCHEME

Super League's capital plan 27



Paul Ince trains at Bisham Abbey yesterday as he relishes his England recall for tonight's game at Wembley

Photograph: Steve Morton/Empics

Venables has faith in Ferdinand

GLEN MOORE
Football Correspondent

The irony was not lost on Les Ferdinand. Having been largely ignored by Terry Venables when he was scoring without pause for Newcastle, he has been chosen as soon as the goals have dried up.

Surely some mistake? No, once Alan Shearer was ruled out with a groin injury Venables had little choice. To pass over Ferdinand, after one start in the squad, and play his new recruit Robbie Fowler would have been a soul-buster. He would have lost the player for good.

Ferdinand will play at centre-forward for England against Bulgaria at Wembley tonight. Although he partnered Shearer in the last international, it was the first time he has filled the No 9 shirt for Venables.

Teddy Sheringham returns to support him while Steve McManaman and, after a year's absence, Paul Ince, are recalled. The other change from December's 1-1 draw with Portugal is Gareth Southgate, who makes his first international start in place of the injured Tony Adams. David Platt has been

left out - Stuart Pearce is tonight's captain.

Venables, who rarely confirms substitutes before match-day, said Fowler would be on the bench. He will be an impatient spectator. "When you come on as assy, it is nice to prove to yourself that you should have been on from the start," Fowler said.

Ferdinand said he had "started to think the fact I was not scoring goals for Newcastle might affect my England prospects." With one goal in five games for Newcastle, he may find being away from the title race relaxes him enough to rediscover his goal touch. "It might be nice to get away from it. It is a very intense situation," he added.

It will certainly be a relief to be partnered by Sheringham, rather than the unpredictable Faustino Asprilla. "You can't blame it all on him," Ferdinand said, "but he does play in a different way. He has a wealth of talent but is difficult to read; you never know what he is going to do next. That he does not speak the language does not help."

Paul Ince would sympathise.

Yesterday he said communication problems had hindered his start in Italy.

They still cause problems: his latest sending-off, for Internazionale on Sunday, came after he disputed a yellow card wrongly given for "diving".

His subsequent failure to leave the field for three minutes could result in a long ban, making a good performance tonight all the more important.

Ince, who last played in the abandoned game in Dublin, said: "It has been a long year. Although I am a strong character I wondered, at the back of my mind, if I was going to get back in. It was getting close to the summer, he had a settled squad, I was not sure what was going to happen. I had to start playing well at Inter, and I have. The difference was the arrival of Roy Hodgson as manager. If he had not come I would

not be at Inter now. He has got the whole team working.

"I knew it was good enough, it was a case of adjusting to Italian life. It is never easy, whatever job you do, to live in a new country." Ince said he nearly returned to England in the autumn but Massimo Moratti, the president who went out on a limb to buy him, persuaded him to remain for the season.

Moratti's persuasive powers may be tested again on Friday, when Inter tell him if he will stay for two more years or exercise his escape clause. His wife, Claire, and son, Thomas, have not settled as well as the player. "Things like Sunday's sending-off do not help," Ince said, "but it is not just a football decision."

Ince partners Paul Gascoigne for the first time since Venables' opening match two years ago. "If we can get a chance to build up a partnership," Ince said, "if they do it could be the beginning of the end for David Platt, who took his omission with typical equanimity. While his experience means he will not

be discarded, he may not regain his former prominence.

Venables emphasised that

Ince and Gascoigne would have to be disciplined in midfield as Bulgaria are excellent on the counter-attack. This may tax Gascoigne, who is inclined to chase the ball, but failure to do so would expose a central defence with less than five hours' international experience between them.

Bulgaria are as potent an attacking force as there will be in the tournament," Venables added. "They were underestimated in the World Cup and still are, yet they have added players since then and are outstanding individually."

A draw, Venables' fourth in five matches, would be a decent result. Even so, a win would not go amiss, if only to make up for having to watch England in grey. They debut their new away strip. Described as indigo blue, it looks more like hattership grey. One hopes there will be more colour in the performance.

Kinkladze rumours anger Lee

Francis Lee, the Manchester City chairman, yesterday forcibly denied that Georgi Kinkladze is bound for Barcelona or Internazionale.

"It's total rubbish," he said, "and the reports that we have given Georgi a massive wage rise to keep him happy is again utter rubbish."

Lee insists that the brilliant Georgian midfielder has just signed a three-year contract. "It looks to me as though certain people think it's a good idea to try and create unrest in our dressing-room," he said. "We are contending with riots writing rubbish."

Another overseas midfielder staying put at another struggling

Premiership club is the Serb Sasa Cacic, who has pledged his future to Bolton.

"They gave me the opportunity to play here and I am determined to repay that both to the club and to the supporters," said Cacic, who cost Bolton a club record £1.5m from Partizan Belgrade.

Brian Laws, the Grimsby manager, is to seek a personal hearing after being charged with misconduct by the Football Association over the Ivano Bonetti affair.

"It is about time the truth was told," said Laws, who was charged after a lengthy FA investigation into events in his team's dressing-room when

Bonetti ended up with a fractured jaw. Laws maintains Bonetti came off worse when he flung a plate of sandwiches in anger, while others have claimed a blow was struck.

Everton's transfer-listed defender Matt Jackson has joined Charlton on a month's loan.

Surgery on a groin strain will deny Sunderland the services of striker Phil Gray for the rest of the season.

■ Feyenoord have been fined a total of £38,000 and threatened with suspension from European competition because of their fans' violent behaviour during the Cup-Winners' Cup quarter-final against Borussia Mönchengladbach.

ARL blames Lindsay for rift

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

The Australian Rugby League chairman, Ken Arthurson, has expressed the hope that the rift with Britain can be healed, but also launched a fierce attack on the role of Maurice Lindsay in the row over Super League.

Arthurson, basing his case on the ARL's victory over Super League in Australia yesterday after his failed attempt, was not available for comment.

Halifax have unveiled plans for a £5m redevelopment of their antiquated Thrush Hall ground. The work, which will begin in October with the building of a new 4,200-seater stand, will take two years and will be

partly paid for, the club hopes, by Lottery funding.

Halifax will be known as the Bluesox from this season, their previous nickname - the Bombers - having signified failure to catch on. "Whatever nickname we came up with offended somebody, so we went for a nickname that offended everybody equally," Nigel Wood, Halifax's chief executive, said.

St Helens will have Joey Hayes back on the wing in place of injured Alan Hunt for their opening Super League game at Workington on Sunday. Their side is otherwise unchanged from the one that beat Widnes in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final.

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Section ONE

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